

September 25, 2016

#### PRAYER

May the words of my mouth be the meditations of our hearts and be always acceptable unto thee. Oh Lord, our strength, and our redeemer. Amen.

#### SERMON

In reading the proper's, the readings for today, it was impossible not to see the theme that runs through them about how we see our life. And how we should not allow the resources, the blessings from God, lead us to rely on those resources. It's a theme we had last week as well, if you remember the last line of the reading of the gospel, Jesus says to the people who are hearing. You cannot serve both God and man. That the love of money is the root of all evil. And that's not to say that money, that resources are not good. It's the love of those things that have a tendency to turn people away from what they should truly focus on. And that is being a follower of God, recognizing God's sovereignty. Following in God's ways, as has been revealed to us in the Old Testament and in the Gospels and in the Epistles. We are called to be followers, recognizing who God is. Recognizing that God is the giver of all that we see, of all that we have, of all that we are.

And in so recognizing to live a life that is directed by God, that is led by God, to recognize God in our lives and the world around us. And to recognize that we are in relationship not only with God but with one another. To recognize that even though God's love for us is equal, each of us loved by God the same and unconditionally. And even though we may consider ourselves being created by God equally, we have not all been endowed with the same gifts. We have not all been endowed with the same opportunities in the families in which we were born where we find ourselves. We are not all equal in the gifts and talents that are part of who we are. And we need to recognize that, we need to understand that we are different. We need to understand that if we had been blessed with great blessings, great resources, great gifts and talents, that we are called to use those not simply for ourselves but to recognize that we have the opportunity and the responsibility to help those who have not been given the same blessings.

That's part of what Amos is saying in his words from God, his prophetic words. That we are to help one another, recognize one another's needs, and when we have abundance to be able to feel free and not be afraid to help one another. To offer to one another out of the abundance that we have been given. Recognizing that it is not only in simply from our hard work that we give this but it is part of the blessings that God has given us. And in recognizing that and in putting God first, then we are glad to share, to help one another, to give to one another. When we see the gospel reading in the parable that Jesus tells to the Pharisees, it is a reminder that we not turn our love from God to the love of resources and things that, the things that we think might help to insulate us from what is bad in the world. To not turn away from God in thinking that God and believing and understanding that God is the giver of all these blessings. And that in recognizing God as the giver and following God's direction. We are free again to share, to honor God by the very blessings with which we have been blessed.

To see the needs of those around us. Isn't that really what this story is about? The rich man has become insulated from the poor, the needy who are sitting right at his gate. He has become so in love with those resources and in the life that he has created for himself that he has pushed God off to the

side. And in pushing God off to the side, he also pushes God's children off to the side. Lazarus sits at his gate day after day. Who would be very happy to eat the things that fall off this man's table because of his abundance, who is so beat and so sick that the dogs come and lick the sores that are on his body. The rich man doesn't see this, doesn't understand that it to be his responsibility in being giving so much abundance to help this poor individual sitting right at his gate.

Now the story, the parable, shows that life doesn't turn out or death doesn't turn out so well for the rich man. He's in torment because he has turned away from God, first and foremost, he's turned away from God. It is his love of money. It is his love of wealth. That has become his goal in life and that's pushed God off to the side. And so Enith he is apart from God as well. He is able to see Abraham, Lazarus and he learns that there is a chasm fixed between it. He asked something very interesting, said can't you send Lazarus to my father's house, I have five brothers and I don't want this for them? I want them to hear and learn and understand that by putting their faith, putting their love and wealth and money and they are taking a path that will lead to torment. Would you please send Lazarus to them because they will listen to him. And of course Abraham's first response is you know, they have Moses the law-giver, they should be able understand that, it's clear enough. They have the prophets, they have Amos, they have all those who have come and spoken to the people of Israel to try to remind them that they have a covenant with God, that they are to have only God as their God, that they are not to push God to the side for any reason, for other Gods and especially not for wealth. They should listen to Moses and the prophets. And then he knows his brothers well enough to know they are just like him. They've gotten so used to the wealth, the abundance that they no longer see how far they have gone from God.

They no longer see the poor and the needy around them. Said you know father Abraham that won't be enough. If somebody comes to them from the dead, then I'm sure they will hear and heed that person. They will set aright their laws. And Jesus using Abraham's voice, speaks of himself, you know, if they don't listen to Moses and the prophets, they won't repent just because someone has come back from the dead. Of course, he's speaking about himself. If they're not listening to Moses and the prophets, chances are they're not going to listen when I come back from the dead either. Jesus is saying this to the Pharisees who in some aspects have even put the law ahead of God or in the place of God. And certainly, admitted them their love of wealth, and their love of money has taken the place of God in their lives. And if they don't hear the words of the prophets calling for social justice for people to see and understand that what they have been given is a gift from God and they have a responsibility from Creation on to be stewards of that abundance and to help raise up those who are lonely. And they won't listen to the voice of one who has been raised from the dead. One who has lived his life, going to the broken, going to those who have gone astray and calling them back, and leading them back to that place of relationship with God where they don't understand God's love for them and they are overwhelmed with their love for God. And able to see the people around them not as competitors for our fine amount of resources but as those who are worthy to receive out of the abundance. What they need for life.

In Paul's letter to Timothy, he uses the phrase "Man of God." As a man of God, now of course we are more politically correct and dispute it because he was really talking about all people, as a person of God. You are to recognize that God is first, not allow the riches, the blessings that come into your life to lead you away from God. The very things that God has blessed you with are now leading you away from God.

As a person of God, you will always put God first, you will be faithful, and run that course of faith. And in doing that you will not be harmed. You will not see wealth as the goal but as an instrument to be able to lift up those who desperately need it. We are called to be stewards of God's creation. From the very first, we hear that in Genesis. From our creation, we are called to be stewards. Stewards are people who understand that when resources they are using are not their own, they belong to the Master. For us that is God. And we are to use those resources to honor the Master, to honor and glorify the one whose property we are using. The property we have and the blessings that we have been given. The gifts and talents which we have. We are called to honor God in one another, by what we have and by who we are.