

Sunday, September 25, 2022 – Sixteenth Sunday after Pentecost

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Introduction

Consideration of and care for those in need (especially those “at our gate,” visible to us, of whom we are aware) is an essential component of good stewardship. It is in the sharing of wealth that we avoid the snare of wealth. It is the one whom death could not hold—who comes to us risen from the dead—who can free us from the death grip of greed.

Prayer of the Day

O God, rich in mercy, you look with compassion on this troubled world. Feed us with your grace, and grant us the treasure that comes only from you, through Jesus Christ, our Saviour and Lord. **Amen.**

First Reading: Jeremiah 32:1-3a, 6-15

In the year before Jerusalem fell to the Babylonians, when the siege had already begun, Jeremiah, imprisoned in the king's palace, purchased a piece of land. The purchase of the land is a sign of hope that God will restore the people to life in the land after the exile.

¹The word that came to Jeremiah from the LORD in the tenth year of King Zedekiah of Judah, which was the eighteenth year of Nebuchadrezzar. ²At that time the army of the king of Babylon was besieging Jerusalem, and the prophet Jeremiah was confined in the court of the guard that was in the palace of the king of Judah, ^{3a}where King Zedekiah of Judah had confined him. ⁶Jeremiah said, The word of the LORD came to me: ⁷Hanamel son of your uncle Shallum is going to come to you and say, “Buy my field that is at Anathoth, for the right of redemption by purchase is yours.” ⁸Then my cousin Hanamel came to me in the court of the guard, in accordance with the word of the LORD, and said to me, “Buy my field that is at Anathoth in the land of Benjamin, for the right of possession and redemption is yours; buy it for yourself.” Then I knew that this was the word of the LORD.

⁹And I bought the field at Anathoth from my cousin Hanamel, and weighed out the money to him, seventeen shekels of silver. ¹⁰I signed the deed, sealed it, got witnesses, and weighed the money on scales. ¹¹Then I took the sealed deed of purchase, containing the terms and conditions, and the open copy; ¹²and I gave the deed of purchase to Baruch son of Neriah son of Mahseiah, in the presence of my cousin Hanamel, in the presence of the witnesses who signed the deed of purchase, and in the presence of all the Judeans who were sitting in the court of the guard. ¹³In their presence I charged Baruch, saying, ¹⁴Thus says the LORD of hosts, the God of Israel: Take these deeds, both this sealed deed of purchase and this open deed, and put them in an earthenware jar, in order that they may last for a long time. ¹⁵For thus says the LORD of hosts, the God of Israel: Houses and fields and vineyards shall again be bought in this land.

Psalm 91:1-6, 14-16

¹You who dwell in the shelter of | the Most High,
who abide in the shadow of | the Almighty—

²**you will say to the LORD, “My refuge | and my stronghold,
my God in whom I | put my trust.”**

³For God will rescue you from the snare | of the hunter
and from the | deadly plague.

⁴**God’s wings will cover you, and you will find ref- | uge beneath them;
God’s faithfulness will be your shield | and defense.**

⁵You shall not fear any terror | in the night,
nor the arrow that | flies by day;

⁶**nor the plague that stalks | in the darkness,
nor the sickness that lays | waste at noon.**

¹⁴I will deliver those who | cling to me;
I will uphold them, because they | know my name.

¹⁵**They will call me, and I will | answer them;
I will be with them in trouble; I will rescue and | honor them.**

¹⁶With long life will I | satisfy them,
and show them | my salvation.

Second Reading: 1 Timothy 6:6-19

Timothy is reminded of the confession he made at his baptism and of its implications for daily life. His priorities will be different from those of people who merely want to be rich.

⁶Of course, there is great gain in godliness combined with contentment; ⁷for we brought nothing into the world, so that we can take nothing out of it; ⁸but if we have food and clothing, we will be content with these. ⁹But those who want to be rich fall into temptation and are trapped by many senseless and harmful desires that plunge people into ruin and destruction.

¹⁰For the love of money is a root of all kinds of evil, and in their eagerness to be rich some have wandered away from the faith and pierced themselves with many pains.

¹¹But as for you, man of God, shun all this; pursue righteousness, godliness, faith, love, endurance, gentleness. ¹²Fight the good fight of the faith; take hold of the eternal life, to which you were called and for which you made the good confession in the presence of many witnesses. ¹³In the presence of God, who gives life to all things, and of Christ Jesus, who in his testimony before Pontius Pilate made the good confession, I charge you ¹⁴to keep the commandment without spot or blame until the manifestation of our Lord Jesus Christ, ¹⁵which he will bring about at the right time—he who is the blessed and only Sovereign, the King of

kings and Lord of lords. ¹⁶It is he alone who has immortality and dwells in unapproachable light, whom no one has ever seen or can see; to him be honor and eternal dominion. Amen.

¹⁷As for those who in the present age are rich, command them not to be haughty, or to set their hopes on the uncertainty of riches, but rather on God who richly provides us with everything for our enjoyment. ¹⁸They are to do good, to be rich in good works, generous, and ready to share, ¹⁹thus storing up for themselves the treasure of a good foundation for the future, so that they may take hold of the life that really is life.

Gospel: Luke 16:19-31

Jesus tells a parable in which the poor one is “lifted up” and the rich one is “sent away empty.” Jesus makes it clear that this ethic of merciful reversal is not new but is as old as Moses and the prophets.

[Jesus said:] ¹⁹“There was a rich man who was dressed in purple and fine linen and who feasted sumptuously every day. ²⁰And at his gate lay a poor man named Lazarus, covered with sores, ²¹who longed to satisfy his hunger with what fell from the rich man’s table; even the dogs would come and lick his sores. ²²The poor man died and was carried away by the angels to be with Abraham. The rich man also died and was buried. ²³In Hades, where he was being tormented, he looked up and saw Abraham far away with Lazarus by his side. ²⁴He called out, ‘Father Abraham, have mercy on me, and send Lazarus to dip the tip of his finger in water and cool my tongue; for I am in agony in these flames.’ ²⁵But Abraham said, ‘Child, remember that during your lifetime you received your good things, and Lazarus in like manner evil things; but now he is comforted here, and you are in agony. ²⁶Besides all this, between you and us a great chasm has been fixed, so that those who might want to pass from here to you cannot do so, and no one can cross from there to us.’ ²⁷He said, ‘Then, father, I beg you to send him to my father’s house—²⁸for I have five brothers—that he may warn them, so that they will not also come into this place of torment.’ ²⁹Abraham replied, ‘They have Moses and the prophets; they should listen to them.’ ³⁰He said, ‘No, father Abraham; but if someone goes to them from the dead, they will repent.’ ³¹He said to him, ‘If they do not listen to Moses and the prophets, neither will they be convinced even if someone rises from the dead.’”

Prayers of Intercession

As scattered grains of wheat are gathered together into one bread, so let us gather our prayers for the church, those in need, and all of God's good creation, saying "God of grace," and responding, "hear our prayer."

A brief silence.

O God, rich in mercy, fill your church with righteousness, faith, love, endurance, and gentleness. Empower the baptized by your Spirit to be rich in good works and ready to share. God of grace, **hear our prayer.**

Protect the earth and its creatures. Provide water, food, shelter, and favorable habitats, especially for endangered species. Preserve threatened ice caps, glaciers, parks, and beaches. God of grace, **hear our prayer.**

Increase justice in nations, local governments, and courtrooms. Guide lawyers and those who hold public office to act with compassion and discernment (*local authorities may be named*). God of grace, **hear our prayer.**

Give food to the hungry. Set the captives free. Lift up those who are bowed down. Watch over the stranger. Tend to those who are ill (*especially*). Stir us to act in the best interest of our neighbors. God of grace, **hear our prayer.**

Enliven our praise. Inspire musicians, artists, poets, and all who create beauty in this place (*those who plan and lead worship may be named*). God of grace, **hear our prayer.**

Enfold the saints who have died in the arms of your loving care. Grant that the holy angels accompany us and bring us to eternal life with them in the light of your presence. God of grace, **hear our prayer.**

Gathered together in the sweet communion of the Holy Spirit, gracious God, we offer these and all our prayers to you; through Jesus Christ, our Savior.

Amen.

A reflection for this Sixteenth Sunday after Pentecost...

Place-sharing

Today's gospel evokes our sympathy. It opens the possibility—described as an impossibility—of place-sharing, trading or sharing places with each other. It also echoes a common theme: the pursuit of wealth in this world can lead us into idolatry and away from faith in Christ. Instead, as the reading from 1 Timothy reminds us, we should pursue righteousness, godliness, faith, love, endurance, and gentleness, so that there is no “poor man named Lazarus” dying at our gates. After all, the greatest treasure—our eternal salvation?has already been procured for us through Jesus’ death and resurrection. Knowing this, we can share all we have with our neighbors, even our very place and salvation, confident that God will continue to provide for our needs.

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