

Lessons for Eighth Sunday after Pentecost**July 31, 2022***Psalm 100 ~ A joyful song of thanks to God who has made us his for all eternity.**Ecclesiastes 1:2, 12-14; 2:18-26 ~ God makes our activities enjoyable, but amassing goods robs us of joy.**Colossians 3:1-11 ~ In Christ, the old self is put to death on the cross, and we receive a new life in him.**Luke 12:13-21 ~ Life is not measured by the possessions we own, but by the One who possesses us.***GATHERING THE TEXTS:** Raise Your Sights!

The Teacher in the First Lesson looked at all his work and the approaching end of his life in utter frustration, but he recognized that satisfaction in labor comes only from the hand of God. In the parable of the rich man, Jesus pointed out that when we only value “our” possessions, we miss the wealth of God. St. Paul urges us to set our minds on things above as we remember that our lives in Christ are redeemed for a greater purpose and an eternal goal.

PRAYER BEFORE THE SERVICE: O Lord, help me lift my eyes above all the attractive things that I value so much in this world, that I may see the wealth of your eternal gift of Life in Christ Jesus, my Savior. Help me measure my life by your grace rather than by my accomplishments, that I may have great gifts of love to give to others. Amen.

STEWARDSHIP THOUGHT: The treasures we gather in this life don’t begin to measure how much God treasures us! To measure God’s love for us, we must look to Christ, who died to possess us for eternity. When we learn to use our goods to share this new meaning of life with others, our lives are filled with joy.

OFFERING PRAYER: Lord, shield us from the useless times,
When barns are full but hearts are empty.
Fill our days with joyful deeds
Through which we share Your gifts of plenty. Amen.

CONVICTION AND COMFORT: We define our lives by possessions; we think how much we have and how great they are, determines our importance on earth. That desire for amassing power drives us to abuse our relationships with other people. The truth of the matter is, it doesn’t matter how much we have, but how much God loves us. In Christ, God has made us His possessions for eternity. He has done away with our old values and made us of much greater value through Jesus’ self-giving on our behalf. In Christ, our lives are filled with meaning as we share this new joy with others.

Questions to Consider: How does God calculate the value of your life?

- Why does it make no sense to strive endlessly for things in this life?
- What does St. Paul that we should set our sights on things that are above?
- What was wrong with the way the rich man stored his crops?
- Where do you find meaning in your life?

Bonus on next page: Two sonnets for Christmas in July

All The Shining Lights

Just look at all the shining lights, and hear
the music in the stores at Christmas time!
The news they have to share with us is clear,
Like tempting voices from a crystal chime:
“Lift up your hands with ready cash,” they say,
“Buy gifts for all your family and friends!
They’ll know how much you care by what you pay,
so give the best before the season ends!”
How well we know that mercenary theme!
It questions love and laces trust with fear,
for even priceless gifts will always seem
so cheap compared to those we hold most dear.
Nor can we ever really count love’s cost
for God to send His Son to save the lost.

*- Gilbert A. Franke
December 2006*

All that Christmas Is

So much to do at Christmas time! At last
the tree is up and all our greetings sent.
The strings of colored lights now brightly cast
their beams, and even darkness seems content
to hide among the shadows. Carols sing
their tunes throughout the house. Delicious treats
are waiting for our guests, and everything
is done. Just one last shopping trip completes
the list. Then heading homeward from the store
I wonder what our celebration means.
If this is all there is and nothing more,
what then are Christmas hopes but hollow dreams?
But God has filled our hearts and manger creche
with Word of promise in the form of flesh.

*- Gilbert A. Franke
November 28, 2007*