

**Lessons for Eleventh Sunday after Pentecost**

**July 31, 2016**

Psalm 100 (*antiphon: vs 3*) ~ *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.