All Saints’ Church October 11, 2015

Twentieth Sunday after Pentecost Year B

Amos 5:6-7, 10-15 Hebrews 4:12-16

Psalm 90:12-17 Mark 10:17-31

Dear Lord, We pray that we may apply our hearts to Your wisdom and grace. AMEN

As you know, we are in the midst of talking about our stewardship.

Six months or so ago, we decided that October would be “our” month for Stewardship.

I never looked at the lectionary.

And here we are. I just read one of the most direct discussions Jesus ever had about money (he had many).

What I love about the **timing** of this gospel lesson is the way it points to one of our deepest heart-felt beliefs: God is both larger than life, creator of all life, source of all being- God as Transcendent. And, at the same time, God is intimately involved with each and every one of us- God as Immanent.

God is creating the world, even as we speak, always and ongoing and also pursuing each one of us, always and ongoing.

I see this scripture speaking directly to us**, timed** by God’s design, pursuing us with God’s love as we are in the middle of our prayers and efforts about stewardship, Pretty Cool!

We are involved. God **needs** our response, because we have a relational God. As author Italo Calvino reminds us, “It’s not the voice that commands the story; it is the ear.”

How are we hearing and listening to God’s Word, to this story for our lives?

Jesus is on the move.

A rich man comes before him, kneeling, in a beautiful gesture of need.

His question is sincere. There’s no guile, no trickery, no manipulation: “Good Teacher, what must I do to inherit eternal life?”

Jesus reminds him that only God is good, and then names a few of the commandments.

The man responds, basically, “Been there, done that.” He’s obviously still hurting from his need.

At this point, Jesus looks on him tenderly, loving him- he sees his pain. He sees that where this man’s treasure is, there his heart will be, as well. His riches are getting in the way.

“Oh Dear One, You lack one thing; go, sell what you own, and give the money to the poor, and you will have treasure in heaven; then come, follow me.”

Shocked and grieved, the rich man goes away. He didn’t realize that throughout his life, he had been called to manage his riches as if he held them in trust for God, who is the ongoing Giver, the One who blessed him with all.

But the story goes deeper than that insight. What pain did Jesus see? What is the one thing that this man is lacking?

I think he is lacking community. He is alone, isolated, separated from himself and his fellow neighbors. Deeply Alientated. His material **stuff** doesn’t fill the holes in his heart. He is longing for connection. There is no center. The dots of his life do not connect. Morality is no substitute.

What does he need?

True dignity, something his social status and riches cannot give him. Dignity can only come through community. It comes by seeing my dignity in you, your dignity in me. We are all worthy, even in a transcendent way, but that is only actualized and realized with and through each other’s lives, face to face.

I am because We are. You are because We are. We’ve been designed this way by God.

One of my greatest desires as your Rector is to shore up who we are as community, to lift us up, to connect, and to celebrate who we are as the Body of Christ, both immanent and transcendent in the power and grace of our togetherness. In this we can do great things and dream God’s dream for us.

We have the great privilege of creating opportunities to share with each other lived experiences of community, found in our worship, through our music, in our in reach and our outreach (Our Community Meal, the Food Pantry, and Ecclesia Ministry all stress the dignity we find in each other as we serve).

And so how can we bring this power and grace of community to Stewardship?

Rather than relegate pledging to a private event, we are opening it up so that our stewardship will give us the opportunity to be closer to each other and to celebrate. We are praying together about how we can say Yes to God’s Work. Let this effort buzz in our midst.

We are each other’s net. As one of my favorite poets, Pablo Neruda, writes…. “in this net, it’s not just the strings that count, but also the air that escapes through the meshes.”

Such fresh air- breathing here and beyond our walls and throughout the world. Spirit-infused, we have been given the privilege of making a difference, and it’s all grounded through our own personal experience with how God calls us to live in and out of our bounty. AMEN.