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1 Timothy 6:6-19, Luke 16:19-31

Rev. John Wertz, Jr.

Director for Evangelical Mission / Assistant to the Bishop, Virginia Synod, ELCA

If you were to read through the letter to Timothy

- that we read a short passage from today,

- you would discover that this letter

- covers a whole range of issues related to life and leadership

- providing directives on topics of faith like prayer

- and qualifications for leaders like bishops and deacons,

- the letter

- offers warnings against false teachers and unfaithful ideas,

- and gives advice for leaders within the church - -

- And then as the letter draws to a close,

- the author shares a few final thoughts -

- that are both instructive and inspirational - -

- “The love of money,”

- we are reminded,

- “is the root of all kinds of evil,

- and in their eagerness to be rich

- some have wandered away from the faith

- . . . Pursue righteousness, godliness, faith,

- love, endurance, gentleness.

- Fight the good fight of the faith. (1 Tim 6:10-12)

- Simple, powerful words -
 - offering perspective on the place of money in our lives -
 - and pointing us toward a still more excellent way of living
 - in relationship to God and to one another - -
- It was good advice for Timothy -
 - and for his church -
 - and it's good advice for you and me as followers of Jesus
 - advice that I imagine, - - -
 - the rich man in Jesus' story -
 - probably wished he had received at some point-
 - in his life -
- for while the rich man seems to have pursued wealth quite successfully,
 - he seems to have utterly failed
 - in the areas of righteousness, godliness, faith,
 - love, endurance, gentleness - -
- especially in his relationship -
 - or lack of relationship with Lazarus. - -
- Lazarus,
 - Jesus tells us,
 - lays at the rich man's gate.
 - He longs for just a bit of food -
 - just a little something to fill the emptiness in his stomach -
- and surely this rich man must have seen him,

- must have known Lazarus was there - -
- and yet he does nothing - -
- to offer assistance -
- to share the blessings that he has enjoyed in life. - -
- It wouldn't even have taken much for the rich man
- to be a blessing in Lazarus' life
- all he had to do
- was pull together the leftovers
- from one feast
- and Lazarus would have given thanks to God
- for the blessings of food that this rich man had shared,
- but instead of being a blessing,
- instead of sharing love with gentleness, - -
- instead of showing kindness and mercy, - -
- the rich man
- seems to have focused only on blessing himself -
- only on building for himself
- a life of selfish excess
- filled with the finest cloths
- the finest food
- filled with more than he could ever want
- or need - -
- and although in life

- it was Lazarus who suffered

- and the rich man who prospered

- in the life to come, Jesus says,

- the rolls are reversed -

- and it is Lazarus who is blessed

- and this selfish man

- who is left wanting -

- on the outside of paradise looking in. - -

- The rich man

- had the gifts to be a blessing to others

- and chose not to do it

- had the opportunity to pursue

- righteousness, godliness, faith,

- love, endurance, and gentleness

- and instead chose to pursue wealth alone. - -

- It's a story that has played itself out -

- time and time again -

- across the centuries. -

- It's a story that plays itself out

- time and time again -

- in today's world -

- as individuals and corporations -

- pursue the love of money, -

- not the love of neighbor -
- or the love of God - -
- which is why I think - -
- Jesus shares this story with us - -
- in hopes that we -
- and all of his people,
- will be good stewards of the gifts we are given
- will be a blessing to those around us -
- and will pursue righteousness, godliness,
- faith, love, endurance,
- and gentleness - -
- not simply a bigger paycheck,
- a larger house,
- or more stuff for ourselves - -
- You see all through this section of Luke
- as Jesus heads to Jerusalem with his disciples, - -
- he is teaching them about how to live and act
- as God's people in the world.
- He knows that he won't be with them much longer
- and he knows that they will struggle at times
- in his absence
- and so here with the story of the rich man and poor man
- Jesus offers a lesson about the temptations of wealth

- and encourages us to follow in his footsteps -
 - by showing compassion and caring to those in need.
- Jesus speaks of wealth often in the gospels
 - probably because he knows that money
 - occupies a prime spot in most of our lives,
 - but as the letter to Timothy points out
 - money, in and of itself,
 - is not the problem. -
 - It's the love of money that gets people in trouble.
- It's the love of money -
 - that gets this rich man in trouble. -
 - He allows his wealth, - -
 - his pursuit of wealth -
 - to isolate him from the world around him -
 - allows his privilege and position -
 - to blind him to the suffering that others are experiencing -
 - right outside his doors -
 - And the results are tragic -
 - both for Lazarus -
 - and ultimately for the rich man - -
 - so Jesus shares this story -
 - in hopes that his followers can chart a different course
 - for themselves and for all the "Lazarus"s of this world -

- Jesus shares this story as a way of inviting us to be good stewards of our gifts
 - shares this story as a way of reminding us
 - not to let the pursuit of wealth rule our lives -
- shares this story as a way of inviting us
 - to be generous with what we have been given
 - and to show compassion to those in need
 - just as Jesus does throughout his ministry
- for Jesus knows that his time with his people is drawing to a close,
 - and in his absence
 - Jesus wants his followers to take up his ministry of compassion -
 - wants his followers to pursue righteousness, godliness, faith
 - love, endurance, and gentleness as best as they can - -
- Now are we going to be able to
 - heal the sick -
 - or feed the 5000 -
 - in exactly the same way that Jesus did - -
 - No - we can't,
 - but we can pray for people who are ill,
 - we can comfort people who are mourning through our presence,
 - we can share compassion with those who are struggling,
 - and we may not be able to use a few loaves and fish
 - to feed the 5000,
 - but we can pool our resources

- and share gifts of food with those who are hungry
- we can work with others
 - to clean up our creation
 - as you did for God's Work, Our Hands
 - to witness to our call to be good stewards
 - of all our gifts,
- we can make space for those
 - who struggle with addiction
 - so they can find the support they need.
- We can't be Jesus,
 - but through teachings like the one that we hear today from Jesus -
 - through the wisdom of scripture revealed in letters like 1 Timothy - -
 - through the witness of our brothers and sisters in Christ - -
 - who are doing their best -
 - to live out their faith in daily life - -
 - We can begin to learn what it means to be good stewards of our gifts - - -
 - we can begin to follow in Jesus' footsteps a little more closely
 - and we can be a blessing to those in need around us
 - sharing the good news of God's love for us
 - through our words and our actions
 - helping the those who struggle like Lazarus
 - instead of ignoring them - -
 - making a difference in people lives

- in Jesus name,
- and Responding to God's generous love for us
- by pursuing righteousness, godliness, faith
- love, endurance, and gentleness..