

Rev. Timothy M. Crummitt

Twenty-Second Sunday after Pentecost - Year B

86th Sunday of Pandemic - Masked Service

Jeremiah 31:7-9

Psalm 126

Hebrews 7:23-28

Mark 10:46-52

10/24/2021

Gospel

The Holy Gospel according to St. Mark:

46As [Jesus] and his disciples and a large crowd were leaving Jericho, Bartimaeus son of Timaheus, a blind beggar, was sitting by the roadside.

47When he heard that it was Jesus of Nazareth, he began to shout out and say, "Jesus, Son of David, have mercy on me!" 48Many sternly ordered him to be quiet, but he cried out even more loudly, "Son of David, have mercy on me!" 49Jesus stood still and said, "Call him here." And they called the blind man, saying to him, "Take heart; get up, he is calling you." 50So throwing off his cloak, he sprang up and came to Jesus. 51Then Jesus said to him, "What do you want me to do for you?" The blind man said to him, "My teacher, let me see again." 52Jesus said to him, "Go; your faith has made you well." Immediately he regained his sight and followed him on the way.

The Gospel of Our Lord

Prayer

Grace and peace to you from God our Father and the Lord Jesus Christ.

Amen.

Consecration Sunday

Good morning! Today is Consecration Sunday! Aren't you excited! Amen! Consecration Sunday is the day of the year that those of us who regularly attend make a commitment, or pledge, of what we will give over the next year. This pledge normally takes the form of what we think we will give monetarily, but it is also a time to make a promise before God regarding our time and talents too. When society tells us that we don't discuss money, religion, and politics with polite company, we go and break two of the three all at once! It's a sermon most parishioners in the pews don't want to hear, and it's a sermon most preachers don't want to write either. But here we are, and talk about it we will.

Region 9 of the Evangelical Lutheran Church in America, which basically consists of everything from Virginia and Tennessee south, is part of a grant program to reduce the debt of pastors from the cost of seminary. Some pastors are leaving seminary with six figures' worth of debt! I applied to the program and one of the requirements is taking part in a class called Six Weeks on Money. I wanted to share with you something from the class that I found fascinating. The author begins by talking about Genesis of all things. You know, the first book in the Bible. He writes that *"Written more than 2,500 years ago, the writer describes... humans. You and I, made in the image of God. What a compelling way to start a very long book about the vibrant history between God and humanity... But a central truth remains. If we are created in the image of God, and if God is generous. Then: Generosity is a part of what it means to live fully alive and fully human."* I'll be honest, I hadn't thought of things like that. Within the very fabric of our beings is a predisposition towards generosity, because we're

¹ Six Weeks on Money, Introduction.

made in the image of God, and God is generous too. Had you ever realized that? Does it change how you look at the gifts that you have been given? Because that's another lesson we get from Genesis. When God made human beings God made us stewards of all of creation.

Do you know what a steward is? A steward is "*one employed in a large household or estate to manage domestic concerns.*"² So that means the steward doesn't own the property they manage. Likewise, we don't really own anything that we claim. At the end of the day, it all belongs to God, not us. So part of being faithful Christians is understanding that we don't really "own" any of what we give to God. Our role as stewards is to make sure that we use what God has first given us in ways that help to tend to all of God's creation. So when we litter, not only are we making trash on God's creation, but we're also saying that God's gifts are worth so little to us that we won't even take the time to dispose of them in an appropriate way.

Consecration Sunday is about our response to God's call in our lives to take part in the ministry that is happening all around us. That call can take the form of all sorts of voices, but sometimes it can come from a pretty high place of authority. In the office we do a devotion from a book titled *365 Saints*. On March 3 we got to hear the story of Blessed Katharine Drexel. She was the daughter of a Philadelphia banker, and was set to get a HUGE fortune. In 1915 it was valued at 15 million dollars, so adjusted for inflation, that's \$325,912,871.29. So we're talking about some serious cash. When she was traveling in Europe she met Pope Leo XII. She asked him to send more missionaries to help with the Native Americans and African Americans here in the USA. The Pope turned the request back around on her, saying that she should become a missionary herself. That seed bloomed into a calling

² <https://www.merriam-webster.com/dictionary/steward>

that saw the founding of Xavier University, the first university for African Americans in the USA.³

What astounds me the most in that story isn't the money she gave away, but the response to a need and call that she heard. Rich people aren't any more special than anyone else, and you don't win God's favor for giving the most. What truly mattered was the intent that was in her heart. She saw a problem, was challenged to help address it, and didn't back down. I often try to demystify money and the stigma that surrounds it in my Consecration Sunday sermons, but this year I wanted all of us to realize that we get that same opportunity as Blessed Katharine. It's the quality, not the quantity of our response that God wants. God needs our money, sure but God needs your skills and time too!

So... people of St. Paul's, made in the image of a generous God, how will you respond to your call? Amen.

³ Bricker, Woodeene. *365 Saints: Your Daily Guide to the Wisdom and Wonder of Their Lives*. San Francisco, Calif: HarperSanFrancisco, 1995. March 3.