

Rev. Timothy M. Crummitt

14th Sunday after Pentecost - Year C

St. Paul's Lutheran Church

Consecration Sunday

Service Book and Hymnal Service

Exodus 32:7-14

Psalm 51:1-10

I Timothy 1:12-17

Luke 15:1-10

09/11/2022

### **Gospel**

The Holy Gospel according to St. Luke:

1Now all the tax collectors and sinners were coming near to listen to [Jesus.] 2And the Pharisees and the scribes were grumbling and saying, “This fellow welcomes sinners and eats with them.” 3So he told them this parable: 4“Which one of you, having a hundred sheep and losing one of them, does not leave the ninety-nine in the wilderness and go after the one that is lost until he finds it? 5When he has found it, he lays it on his shoulders and rejoices. 6And when he comes home, he calls together his friends and neighbors, saying to them, ‘Rejoice with me, for I have found

my sheep that was lost.’ 7Just so, I tell you, there will be more joy in heaven over one sinner who repents than over ninety-nine righteous persons who need no repentance. 8“Or what woman having ten silver coins, if she loses one of them, does not light a lamp, sweep the house, and search carefully until she finds it? 9When she has found it, she calls together her friends and neighbors, saying, ‘Rejoice with me, for I have found the coin that I had lost.’ 10Just so, I tell you, there is joy in the presence of the angels of God over one sinner who repents.”

The Gospel of Our Lord

### **Prayer**

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

Amen.

### **Worth**

Good morning! What are you worth? How do you value your time? As I was preparing this week's sermon I kept thinking about that. Did you know that the average person works 2,080 hours a year? So, at the minimum wage, that's \$22,880 a year. If we don't account for inflation and assume a person makes the same wage their whole working life, between say ages 21-62, that works out to \$938,080. Is that the value of a person? Can you even put a numerical value on a life? The United States military

was one of the first to try and attempt the valuation of a human life, but the number that most insurance companies seem to agree on right now is somewhere between 7.5 and 9.6 million dollars. Leave it to the insurance companies to put an actual amount on the value of life! But, it is interesting. Which brings us to today...

Today is Consecration Sunday! It's the day we return our estimates of giving for the coming year, a tangible commitment between you, the church, and God regarding what you plan to give. Which means that we get to talk about money! Some people call this stewardship Sunday, and it is often the only time you'll hear the pastor preach about money. I hope that by this point we have come to understand that stewardship is something that transcends just money, and is certainly important enough that a once a year sermon on the topic just isn't enough. But I have made it an intentional time every year to do a few things.

The first is about changing how we think about money. We are often conditioned to think that our money is something private that should never be talked about. It creates this weird mystique and secrecy around something that Jesus spends more time talking about than any other topic. If Jesus thinks it should be talked about openly, why can't we do the same? So, in an attempt to start a more open dialogue, I have shared what Megan

and I plan to give in the coming year. We hope to give \$5,100 over the 2023 fiscal year to St. Paul's. One thing Megan has been giving consistently since the beginning of the pandemic is her time during worship. She's been running Zoom and our streaming set-up for two and a half years now. This is an example of giving of our time and talents. While we put a large emphasis on the specific dollar amount when it comes to giving, we also give our time and skills. Throughout the year we both try to "donate" those things when we can.

While I've approached the sermon for Consecration Sunday fairly similarly every year, I realized that one thing I have not done adequately enough is to give thanks. Thank you. Honestly. The ministry of St. Paul's is fully dependent on the gifts that you provide. In annual reports and end of year thank you letters I've tried to list the many things that your giving has enabled us to do, so I won't repeat that here. But I will once again say thank you. Since the very beginning of Jesus' ministry the church has relied on the hospitality and graciousness of those in its community.

But I also wanted to take this time and single out one specific person, the late Catherine Ebersole. Years ago she set aside a chunk of change for St. Paul's, and after she died, we were given via a trust \$200,000. This is amazing! Do you realize how fortunate we are?! Like Helen Clark and

Irving Overstreet before her, Catherine took steps to make sure the money would be used in a specific way. Only the interest can be used every year, and the specific areas where it can be spent fall roughly into the same categories as the Helen Clark fund. How cool is that though! Long after Catherine is gone the ministry of St. Paul's will continue to be impacted by her gift.

It was as I thought about this that I realized that while I've talked about giving to the church, I've never made the following plea. Have you ever thought about setting up something so that in the event of your death, a ministry like St. Paul's could receive a gift? It's an awkward thing to ask. Many a pastor has let a chance go by because they were uncomfortable asking. So, again, have you thought about creating a long-term gift? Now, say you want to do something like that, but don't know where to start, that's great! Neither do I! But give me a call anyway! Because while I don't know what to do, people like Pastor John Wertz, one of our Synodical Assistants to the Bishop, DOES know what to do.

Like I said, it's weird talking about money so openly, but as a community of believers, we're called to buck the trend and live a life that prioritizes caring for one another, a place where secrecy isn't masqueraded under the name of privacy. If we want St. Paul's to be a place where God's

work happens, we need to donate our time, our talents, and our money to make sure that it happens. This means that St. Paul's can only do as much or as little as the community wants to do. Is there something we're missing, help us make it happen. Are we forgetting a group that God has called for us to care for, speak up.

We give for a lot of reasons, but by far the most important is because it's an exercise in trust. The world will tell you that you will never have enough. The more you make, the more you'll stand to lose, and so hoard the money... because you never know... Now, I'm not saying that we shouldn't be responsible with the blessings that God has given us, but I will say that the love of money is a very tempting idol. When we give, whether that be church, a person in need, or another group or organization, we spit in the face of that idolatry, telling the world that our needs are met, that God has provided, and ultimately, God's gifts deserve to be shared. Amen.