

Pentecost C-18, 2007

Luke 16: 19-31

September 30, 2007

Title: Take Hold of the Life that Really is Life

Let us pray.

Lord, keep us alive. Hold on to us so that we may hold to what we have less firmly, hold to each other more graciously, hold this world more Christ like. We thank you for your eternal holding in Jesus. Amen.

I once saw a demonstration video on seeing. We were given instructions to look at persons in the video wearing a red shirt. And count how many there were. When the video was over we were asked—Did you see the bear walk across the room?

Nobody saw the bear. The video was replayed and there it was,
Among all the red shirted people, walking across the room.
It was there and we didn't see it.

Can we so focus on one thing that we miss really seeing? Lives so mono-focused that we miss out. What if the bear in the room is what Paul writes to Timothy—real life? Life giving relationship or a true joy that Can't be taken away.

I so love a scene in the movie Good Will Hunting in which
The counselor played by Robin Williams is describing having
A ticket to the World Series Game in Boston when Carlton Fisk
Hit the late inning home run to win the game. "Were you at that
Game?" asks his youthful client played by Matt Damon.

"No I gave my tickets away.
Because I met this women that night. Had I gone to that
Game I'd have never known my wife."

In a sense he didn't want to miss seeing his bear.

What tickets, what game can so possess us that we miss seeing real life?

It could be any number of things—but in the scriptures it seems to
Be the pursuit of wealth.

Amos has harsh words for purchasing the ticket of leisure

Ivory beds, couches for lounging, idle songs, wine and fine oils.
Sounds pretty good. Like most of the magazine ads that
Grab you. What's wrong with fine music played over
A glass of merlot?

And our Lord Jesus' parable. The rich man not even noticing the
Person at his feet. And when in need still only sees Lazarus as
Some servant to help his siblings.

Is there a bear in these rooms?

What Amos and Jesus point out is a real life danger—pursuit of riches
Can rob you of empathy, blinding you to the plight of others. The rich man
couldn't even see Lazarus as a human being. Here was the bear at his gate.

In what ways do such biblical judgements impinge on us?
Who are the Lazarus' at our gate we'd prefer to not see?
Lazarus is not one person now—Lazarus is legion.

Whole peoples at our gate—in New Orleans, in the southern
Hemisphere. Who do we not see while in pursuit of counting
Our red shirts, our portfolios, our next glass of merlot?

These are not easy questions. And in this day of so much instant
information much of it tending toward bad news—it is so tempting, so very
tempting to just turn inward.

Paul's instruction to Timothy sheds light on all this
He acknowledges the dangers of wealth—eagerness for wealth
Led some away from the faith.

What are we to pursue? What is the body of Christ to focus on?
Paul names it:
Pursue righteousness, godliness, faith, love, endurance,
Gentleness. These six virtues become bear like. They
Aren't measurable, but they are practices which
Form faithful living.

As a child of the living Christ where are you being called to endurance?
What is the bear of gentleness the spirit is placing in your path?
How are you being invited to receive the future in trust?

How is god calling you to righteousness?

All this is about staying alive---keeping the doors of our hearts open.

My brothers and sisters—fight the good fight of the faith---don't give in to the life crushing lure to serve only self.

Take hold of eternal life—live toward the mission of this congregation
To believe in Christ, to belong to Christ's family, to serve as
Christ's family in the world.

When I look at the stewardship of my life and I'm at my
Worst I think of something I focus on at home.
I'm the guy who cuts off the lights....

That's what I've done, I've cut off lights...
Paul to Timothy to David—take hold of the confession you made—

To live a life reflecting the life—Jesus
To let your light shine, to bear witness to real living.
We are not called into this life, into this church
To shut out lights—we are called to
Spread light.

At our recent Coffee House a woman figured out I was the one who could be sure this community would sing her Happy Birthday. Once she found me, She was unrelenting. I promised her in a little while. That would satisfy her Briefly. She came back over. David, you promised. After this next song. I got distracted. The next song came and went. She came back and said ---you promised, you promised.

Finally, I got to it. We sang her Happy Birthday.
And when we were done, she came back over. I was expecting her
To thank me—she didn't. She simply said not to forget one
Of her friends next month.
Okay.

Fight the good fight of the faith.

God in Christ continues to come to us, seeking us out to sing the song of life in this sad, sick world. To be his presence here and to live from the energy

his spirit gives for life.

The good news of life in Christ is not just information, it's formation. Faith formation is life long work—and it's bear in the room!

Now a question: Stand up if you don't own anything.
If you don't even own the clothes on your back, stand up.
This is not meant to be an admission of poverty. It is
An acknowledgement that all is a gift, and we
Are but stewards of these gifts. My car, on loan.
My home, a gift; the lunch I will eat today, a gift.

The implications are life shaping. How do I regard wealth? Am I entrusted with it or is it mine?

The letter to 1 Timothy is straight forward: command the rich
To not be haughty or to set their hopes on the uncertainty
Of riches, BUT RATHER on God who richly provides
Us with everything for our enjoyment.

Enjoyment.

Christians are able to resist greed because of our grounding in the faith. We are called by the God who gives life to all things. We are his, our true security is in Him. Jesus' cross is imprinted on us. As the song says,

We belong to a mighty God!
Each day we can start over. The certainly of his love is the only certainty.

This is not just information. Another commerical. A nice jingle. This is who we are. Faith formation.

So that when you and I give our witness, we could stand up and
The words of I Timothy take shape in us

We do good;
Rich in good works
Generous
Ready to share

The life that is really life has hold of us.
Take hold of the life that really is life. Amen.

