

8th Sunday after Pentecost Sermon
July 30/31, 2022

Where your heart is, there your treasure will also be. Often, we do not even know where our heart is. How can we really understand what we treasure? We are also a people of mixed loyalties. So let us dig a little deeper and understand a little more the salvation that Christ is offering us. Too often, I think we look at salvation as a salve that is applied, dealing with a few issues, and then go on to live life as a good person. We do not see it for what it is.

There is nothing wrong with being a decent person. In fact, in the age of indecency, please, be decent. But if our faith is based upon our behavior, then there is no need for a savior. To be saved means that someone else must do something for/to us in order for what needs to happen, to happen. This is not an immediate salvation, in the sense that all that needs to be done being done instantaneously, yet it is complete in the sense that Christ now comes as the head of our person and begins the process of making us new, from the inside out. It is not a remodel, but we are being made into something new. "Behold, I make all things new."

We are created. God is the creator. We did not make ourselves, but we are made by God. In our day, many really do believe they are able to choose their identity, determine whom they will be, and set a course of their own making. In other words, they rebel against God by saying, "You did not make me, I am making myself." This is nothing less than a repackaging of the age-old rebellion which began with our first parents, Adam and Eve. God knows this and offers us the opportunity to live as we were created to live. In order to do this, things must change within us. Yes, within us, not just on the outside. But, don't worry, live long enough and things will change on the outside.

We are reminded that each of us has an appointment with death. Jesus gives us the ability to not just meet it head on, but meet it ahead of time. By that, I mean that if we truly live knowing that we are united with Christ's death, and willingly die to sin, death, and the devil, then we can begin to live the new life which will be ours forever in and through Him. By dying once to death, death no longer has hold over us. Do think this through. The whole premise of Jesus's story is about someone who is denying what is inevitable in this age. Die to sin and get it over with. Live in Christ and life will never end.

"If I just have more stuff, I will finally find what I have been looking for!" "I love my stuff." Collect more things, build a bigger storage place and then show everyone how much stuff we have. I wonder why people don't do that with their bank account numbers? Actually I do know, but have you ever Googled seeking to know about some famous person and right up there at the top of the list of questions is, "How much are they worth?" Think about that question. We think in dollars and cents. We think in terms of stuff. To God, every life is so precious that He was willing to go to the cross for them. Yes, every single person. Including the rich fools of this world. And the truth is that none of us really owns anything. To really own something is to have complete control over what you own. You say you own your house? Really? Then, why do you pay taxes on it? Why can't you do as you please with it? The same thing goes with many of the things you say that you own.

Jesus said that it is easier for a camel to go through the eye of a needle than to enter heaven. There are many interpretations of this, but just think of this in obvious terms. Jesus is saying that it is impossible. What does He mean by this?

I know many who do not think of themselves as rich in this world, but they are. We have so many opportunities, so many things that can be experienced, so much available at our

fingertips that we often forget how much we are influenced by this world. The aim of life is not to eat, drink, and make merry. In and of themselves, they are decent experiences, but to live for them is to live a foolish life. To think that you can take your attitudes, reasoning, behaviors, and many of the things we cling to in this life as the meaning of life is to deny what Christ has come to do for those who believe. Knowing that belief is action, what we do reflects what we believe, what we have faith in. If we believe that Christ saves us, then we do well to learn how to do things His way and adopt His reasoning, behavior, and attitude.

What you do, how you think, the reasoning behind your actions each leave a mark on your soul. The ability to overcome a small sin today may mean the winning of a major position sometime in the future. So also, the willing, even unthinking capitulation to small things now means digging a deeper and deeper pit of sin with each failure. This should make sense, for this is what we mean when we say that we live a life of repentance. Someone who resists a temptation knows much more about what is being resisted and has much more strength and understanding of the struggle with temptation than does one who always gives in and never bothers to resist what ought to be resisted. We live in an age that not only does not respect resisting temptation, but actually encourages us to give in to every whim. "Go ahead, you deserve it!" This is simply a denial of the salvation which Christ gives to those who believe.

Contrary to the notion of simply being a decent person, or cleaning up our act, this is about something different, or as Christ declares is, "Being made new." There are going to be injustices in this age, the greatest of which was Christ being nailed to the cross. Through this one act, God has demonstrated that it shall be as He determines and not as we think or want it to be. We are reminded by Jesus that this is His creation and He invites us into life as He created it to be lived. He made us; we did not make Him.

If you or I are unwilling to place ourselves in God's hands, if we intend to do things our own way, then we are amongst the foolish believing that our existence can be controlled by us. Jesus has come to restore a right relationship with the Father through Him and by the means He has made possible. To have faith is to trust in Him. To believe is to live in the faith that you are being made new through what Christ has done, is doing, and will do. If we look to a future in which all we need is provided by our hand and to our satisfaction, what happens when we do not make it to that day? So many in this world seem to take one of two sides of the same coin, either living for today without a care for tomorrow, or else store things up for that day when they can live on easy street and enjoy the fruit of their labor. None of us knows our days. We do not know what tomorrow will bring.

Having been raised with Christ, we are to seek the things from above. Christ, who sits at the right hand of the Father will return to judge each of us for our deeds. He calls for us to invest in that which can neither be taken, nor destroyed. The gift of your life has been given you by the One who created you. Through the salvation He offers, he calls us to come through the means of grace He gives and live toward the goal, which is the prize of your faith, and that is everlasting life with and through Christ our Savior.

Why settle for an earthly inheritance – which is no inheritance at all – when what is offered you is a new life, being prepared to be united in eternity with the One who creates, redeems, and sustains you. We have each been called to become children of the Heavenly Father and through what Christ has done for us, and what we shall be by His grace. Store up for yourselves treasures in heaven where moth and rust do not destroy and thieves cannot steal. Place your heart in the hands of Christ our Savior. Amen.