

Sermon Proper 14 Year C August 8, 2010

For where your treasure is, there your heart will be also. Amen.

In our first reading today, God promises Abraham that his descendants will become a great nation. This seems like an unlikely prospect considering he and his wife are childless. As we were reminded with the first promise at the Oaks of Mamre three weeks ago Sarah is well past the age of childbearing, (roughly 90 years old) and he is a 100. What's important is that Abraham takes God at God's word.

Our second reading from Hebrews goes through a recitation of our early ancestors in faith, becoming for us in the Christian community examples of responding to life in faith. What did Abraham do that was so remarkable that his story continues to be recorded by Paul in this letter to the Hebrews?

The story of Abraham is one of responding to God by leaving his home and setting out, not knowing where he was going. He simply responded by faith... that what God promised would come true has indeed come true. Abraham's descendants are as numerous as the stars in the sky, with nearly 4 billion people living on the planet today claiming Abraham as their "Father in faith" Jews, Christians and Muslims. Thus, Abraham provides for us... "the new wandering people" a model to emulate in being sent out and prepared to go where God sends us, not knowing where we are going.

The parable of the waiting servants in the gospel also ties into the other two readings today. The early church literally believed that the return of their Lord would take place at the Passover, as the first Israel believed that the

Messiah would come that night. When Christ did not literally return at midnight, the church celebrated the agape-Eucharist in which Christ came in advance of his final coming. So the promise of God is fulfilled at this and every Eucharist....we recount the great deeds of God in our readings....the story of salvation, it is recounted in our prayer of Great Thanksgiving and God comes to us in Christ through the reception of communion, and prepares us to go out, not knowing where we shall be sent from week to week. It is the promise fulfilled, while we continue to wait for Christ's final coming to us.

One message for us this Sunday taken from our readings is, "Faith is taking God at God's word when God makes promises for the future."

In a remarkable way, here, in the middle of summer, the readings bring together themes that we associate with Easter and Advent. They might serve to remind us that in this apparently uninteresting season of Ordinary Time the weekly Eucharist derives its meaning from those seasons when we look back and celebrate the mighty acts of God in the past and the saints and great figures God has used to accomplish God's purposes, and when we await the future consummation of history with Christ's final coming.

This waiting for Christ and being ready as the gospel urges us, is not a passive Waiting but one that is very active and always preparing again and again. Faith is not static but a participatory sport. We are not to store up things we are told. We are not to rest either on our laurels....or on those things that we might have done for God in the past, but to acknowledge

them and be ready to ask ourselves, what now is it that God would have me do? This is the central question that I find I ask myself nearly every day.

With three small children, a spouse, and my responsibilities here at St. James' I find that I'm constantly asking and weighing what is it and where would God have me be today. This is hardly a pious question I ask, but a real on the ground practical one. Who is it that will stop by my office today and need to talk? What calls need to be made to those needing something? Do I have time today to visit at a nursing home or at someone's home? What about time for sermon preparation? Where are you God in each of these situations? What should I do?

As a way to evaluate where I actually spend my time, not just where I think I spend my time, Val and I in the office have undertaken a time audit of ourselves in 15 minute increments. The goal of this is to track for a few weeks where we actually spend our time as a way to provide the parish with a more accurate picture of what it takes to keep things going around here and to make changes if necessary to be good stewards of our time as well.

A close friend and neighbor of mine, Mike Baker wrote a provocative article titled "Time the New Currency." In this brief piece Mike talks about how the contemporary currency of our day is our time. It is more and more precious as competing demands confront us day in and day out. What we choose to spend our time on is even more important than where we choose to spend our money. With this as an image I believe that Mike is telling us that in our contemporary context Time is our Treasure and where we invest our time is actually where our heart lies.

This is the second message I take from the readings today, “where your time is spent there your heart will be also.”

So we have before us two important messages that lead to some very personal questions for each of us.

The first message I take is “Faith is taking God at God’s word when God makes promises for the future.” We are called to step out in faith literally into the unknown day after day and ask ourselves where is God taking us and what are we to do now....not what we did a year ago or last week, but right now.

The second message I take from today is, For where your treasure is, there your heart will be also. Where I choose to invest my time is as important or maybe more important than where I choose to place my material treasure.

These two messages lead to the questions I will leave with you today.

Where is God calling you to step out in faith...into the unknown today?

And, Where is it that you spend your treasure? Where is it that you spend your time? For there your heart also lies. Amen.