

The Sermon 11-27

This is the First Sunday of the Christian Year. Yet our scripture lessons flow from the last Sunday of the Year. We have concluded Last week we concluded the stewardship season with the final assessment of our stewardship – the final judgment. Advent begins the Christian year, preparing for the arrival of Christ, not only as baby, but as the judge on the last day as well.

So we have considered the urgency of being prepared, the creativity of stewardship, and then the goal of our stewardship – right relationship. Today’s lesson recaps stewardship, restates urgency (and with another reference to right relationship.)

Mark 13: 24-37

2 peter 3:8-15

Christ comes out of the darkness to us, as the light
And we go into the dark world bearing the light

So we live at this point out of the dark and into the dark. Yet what we risk as we consider texts about the end of the world is distraction and confusion as to our task.

Our task is right relationship – yet the world besets us with overwhelming need. Both in human details, and in traumas of global scale. This year we have seen tsunami in Japan, and massive tornados in our own nation. These natural disasters are as near as our computer screen. At the same time, global economic upheaval has an impact as close to home as our neighbors or family members who have lost their job or are at risk.

In the midst of this it is easy to be distracted. It is easy to falter – like the failing steward in the parable of the talents. That steward “knows the master is a hard master, reaping where they have not sewn, and so the steward digs a hole and buries their talent. Here master, you have what is yours.”

I think the heart of the matter is the problem of hope and fear. It is hope and fear which plays with us in the headlines. We try to have hope but the scale of the worlds problems makes it very easy to sit on our talent saying “I am too small to make a difference” “the problems are too large”.

But the conclusion of the stories of the talents and the story of final judgment makes a very clear statement: what matters is what you do.

So do it.

In this regard, our resolve is crucial. Because resolve is the step before enactment. Resolve is that moment of intent, when we know what we need to do. Then we do it.

You should understand that I am an advent kind of person. I believe we are measured according to how we live. For me, faith is not what we believe and not how we feel. (I am not saying that this must be your understanding. But I am clear that it is my understanding)

Faith is what we do and how we live. As John the Baptist will phrase it next week: you should live as befits repentance. Live like the new life in Christ has changed you.

In this way the prayer of the day outlines clearly what we need: courage in our stewardship, the assurance of God's presence, clarity as to God's purpose, and a sense of the gifts which we develop for God's sake. Because God is calling for us to be creative: developing our gifts and abilities in our stewardship, living in right relationship, and developing our life in mission and faithfulness. As the people of Christ.

Pastor Dave