**September 8th 2024 Fifteenth Sunday after Trinity**

**Text: Luke 12:15-21** 0736

**Theme: Where Your Heart Is.**

May the Lord of all grant unto each of us contentment and peace in the knowledge of the treasure to come, that we may be His children in this life and in the life to come. Amen. Dear friends in Christ Jesus: The heart of man tells the truth. One cannot hide his heart from God, for God is all knowing, and sees right to the heart of man. We hear God tell us: *“I the Lord search the heart, I try the reins, even to give to every man according to his ways, and according to the fruit of his doings.” (Jer. 17:10)* These words should strike fear into our hearts, for we know what is in our own hearts. Could any man open his heart to the just God of heaven and earth and not tremble? As we hear again: *“The heart is deceitful above all things, and desperately wicked: who can know it? (Jer. 17:9)* When I think of the things that I personally have done, when I think that God knows each of them, that he witnessed each act, each word, each thought, I am ashamed and I fear His wrath and punishment. Truly this is the primary work of the law to inflict our consciences with guilt and shame, to make of secure sinners, terrified sinners. Once this work has been accomplished the glorious Gospel of Jesus Christ can be applied to those terrified consciences and heal the wounds of the Law with the knowledge of grace for the sake of Jesus Christ given to such sinners. Each of us has had both the work of the Law and the work of the Gospel performed upon us by God, and this takes place day in and day out. But there is a grave danger that the world and our own flesh poses to our freed souls. It is the danger of something which our flesh loves more than anything else in this world. It is the cause for nearly all evil that takes place in this world. It threatens the very salvation of believers and is a clear and present danger.

This danger is spoken of and is a common theme throughout Scripture. It is dealt with, in one way or another, in all Ten Commandments, in the Lord’s Prayer, the Apostles’ Creed, and even in the teaching of the sacraments, for it is inextricably linked to everything in this world, and against everything in the world to come. It cannot be taught enough, warned against often enough, and exhorted to believers to put a great distance between themselves and it. It is the practice of covetousness, the evil desire of a heart to gather to himself as many possessions and as much wealth as he can. Solomon the King of Israel, more blessed than any other king or man who has ever lived, blessed with wisdom, riches, peace, and blessing in more ways than we can even imagine, wrote quite extensively on this subject, spending twelve chapters explaining the vanity of this world and all its stores and treasures. Dear Christians we are not exempt from these dangers, we are not free and clear of our flesh. Do not imagine that we have overcome the temptations, the stumbling blocks that Satan casts in our way, for the moment we begin to believe this we have put ourselves in the greatest danger yet, for we are entirely unprepared to face them. Imagine a football team who spent an entire week not practicing, seeing the sights, partying every night, watching no film on the opposing team, assuming that the other team posed no danger, no threat. And so game day comes and they go out to face the other team with no preparation at all; one would not pity them when they were blown out by the inferior team, for they did not prepare. So is the person who believes that he has no threat posed by this world, his own flesh, or Satan. It is my solemn duty to warn and protect the members of this congregation. God told Ezekiel and all pastors: *“I have set thee a watchman unto the house of Israel; therefore thou shalt hear the word at my mouth, and warn them from me.” (Ezek. 33:7)* We will then, take a closer look at the danger posed to us and our souls, and we will see what would be given up by falling prey to it. We will do so in our text for today which is found in the twelfth chapter of the Gospel according to Luke beginning at verse fifteen.

**Quote text here.**

Let us pray, O dearest Lord Jesus Christ, our Savior and King, we humbly bow before Thee in reverence and awe, pouring forth unto Thee a confession of our most heinous sins, imploring Thy mercy and grace in forgiving them, though we in no wise deserve such kindness. Yet Thou hast promised to forgive us for even the worst sins, through the merit of Jesus Christ and faith in Him, and we thank Thee forever for such love. We implore Thee to send Thy Holy Spirit in great measure unto us, that we not lay up treasures for ourselves on earth, but lay up for ourselves treasures in heaven, where they cannot be taken from us. Show unto us the truth of the things of this world and their vanity, their frailty, and their fleeting nature, so that we not treasure them as the highest good, but have our hearts fixed on the true treasure, that of faith and righteousness, salvation, and eternity with Thee. Teach us of what lays in store for them that love Thee in sincerity and truth, that we may never place our trust in uncertain riches, but in the certainty of salvation. Make us rich in faith, rich in the knowledge of Thee and of Thy will, and make us workmen which need not to be ashamed. Finally, we ask that Thou wouldst finish the work Thou hast begun in us, as Thou hast promised, that when our final hour shall come, we may with all the saints receive the greatest of all treasures, even eternity with Thee. Amen.

Beloved, let us hear the Word of our Savior unto us, learning first that where your treasure is, there your heart will be also. Let us learn first that the heart of many is fixed on:

1. **Treasure upon earth.** We read verses fifteen through twenty of our text: **read verses here.** In our Gospel lesson Jesus told us that there are two choices to which our hearts may cling. Either they cling, love and trust in the things of this world, or of those things found in the world to come, in heaven. Many men fix their hearts on the things of this world, in fact, the vast majority do so. Why is this the case? Why do men choose these things over salvation? Well it is because they are tangible and present. Men can see them, they can hold them in their hands, they can count their money, they can open their ledgers and proudly behold their bank accounts. They can drive their expensive cars, they can show off their impressive houses, and they can step back and look with pleasure at their accumulations, their own magnificence and declare as Nebuchadnezzar: *“Is not this great Babylon, that I have built for the house of the kingdom by the might of my power, and for the honor of my majesty?” (Dan. 4:30)* Truly it is much easier to trust in something that you can see, feel, and lean upon without fear that it is not there. And here is the danger for a Christian. The enemy, Satan, whispers in our ear constantly: “Is God there? Is His hand there to catch you when you fall? Are His promises true? Where is the proof? But just look at your bank account, you can see the wealth of this world, you can feel those dollars in your hand, you can reliably trust that these things are there, for they are tangible to your senses.” And herein are all the warnings of Scripture, telling us the dangers, the temptation to trust in the things of this world. And those things have the feeling, the appearance of security. They appear on the surface to be trustworthy. But, the Scriptures show of what sort they truly are. They are nothing but damnation and condemnation. They are fleeting and brief. They are unreliable and untrustworthy. They are corruptible and subject to theft. They are nothing really. We have all experienced those times of our lives where the things of this world have failed to deliver on their promises. Money wastes away, houses wear out, cars break down, our bank accounts dwindle, and we wonder where it all went, how we fell so hard, so fast.

Often these difficult earthly times are designed and allowed by God to show the true nature of the things of this world. It is to teach us, to instruct us, so that we might avoid the pitfalls that men like Solomon have fallen into, wasting their whole lives in pursuit of possessions and in the end they do them no good at all, for as Paul said in our epistle lesson, we cannot carry anything out of this world. We will go just as we came: naked and destitute of all possessions. Thus the parable of Jesus shows the folly of laying up treasures on this earth, ignoring the poor, neglecting to give to the church, selfishly hoarding to ourselves great wealth, only to have them all taken away and given to another upon our death. Solomon said: *“Labor not to be rich: cease from thine own wisdom. Wilt thou set thine eyes upon that which is not? For riches certainly make themselves wings; they fly away as an eagle toward heaven.” (Prov. 23:4-5)* It is for this reason that many places in Scripture implore us to guard our hearts, to not place our trust in things of this world, to understand their fleeting nature, for if we were to love the world and the things of this world, we might get great gain, possessions, wealth, stores in abundance as the man in the parable, but we will lose something far greater. And this is really the import and meaning of the parable, though few words are spoken concerning it. Thus our hearts may be fixed on treasures of this earth, or the:

1. **Treasure in heaven.** We read verses fifteen and twenty one of our text: **read verses here.** It is to be noticed and noted in our text what Jesus is not condemning. Christ is not saying that having possessions, even abundant possessions is evil, nor is it sinful to have a large bank account. What then was this man’s sin? What is he being condemned for? In the opening passage notice where his great possessions proceed from: the ground. The ground brought forth abundantly, whereupon he began to delight in his wealth, in his great gain, instead of continuing to trust in God, he began to trust in his overflowing barns. His sin was of idolatry, greed, lust. He never stopped to understand that it was God who gave him all these things, and it is God which blesses his barns, and he loses sight of this altogether. He does not thank God for his many blessings, and using those blessings to help his neighbor, or even the kingdom of God, but so that he may take his ease; eat, drink, and be merry. Jesus calls him a fool, for foolish is the man who gives up the greatest treasure that can be given unto man for a lower treasure, a temporary treasure. And here we have found the true and proper teaching of our text, eternity. Again Solomon said: *“Better is little with the fear of the Lord than great treasure and trouble therewith.” (Prov. 15:16)* When a heart runs and is fixed on the things of this world, it loses its salvation, the forgiveness of sins, and worst of all, eternity with God in heaven.

The eventual fate of those who trust in riches, men, or anything other than the true God, the Triune God, is described in Scripture as: weeping and gnashing their teeth, dwelling in a furnace of fire, a place of torment, the cursed dwelling place of Satan and demons, whose purpose will be to torment and torture all who are cast therein. In sharp contrast to that is the description of heaven: a place of no tears, eternal happiness, eternal reward, eternal health. A place where men dwell in security and safety, a place inhabited by God Himself, streets paved with gold, gates made of pearls and walls made of gemstones, the abode of God’s angels, the celestial kingdom, the heavenly Jerusalem, our true home. It is necessary for us to be reminded again and again, our whole lives through of that which awaits us at our departure of this life. We are forgetful, we are weak, we are doubting, and the allure of the riches of this world catch our eye all too often, and we need to be shown what it is that awaits us, and these promises make us willing to depart from everything in this world, if it means receiving the treasures of the world to come. It is our faith, the gift of faith, which allows us to do this, to give up our wealth to go and teach the Gospel, to turn our backs to the lash, to stick our necks into the guillotine, to endure chains, to be stoned, to give our hard earned money to the church, for there is something far greater that we await. We may have less in this world, we may give up houses, cars, fine clothing and the like, but we will be given mansions in heaven, we will be transported by the Spirit of God, we will be clothed in white raiment woven by God Himself, we will have the wealth of righteousness, we will reign as kings with Christ our Savior. Is there anything in this world valuable enough to give that up? Is there anything that our hearts could desire? Not according to faith, and it is here that we find the solution, the preparedness spoken of earlier. We acknowledge the danger posed to our souls, we repent of our evil lust, and we believe the Gospel because God, who is gracious and merciful, grants us faith and uses the promises of the Gospel to sustain us in this life. In fact, the Word and Sacraments are the means whereby we are sustained and He has wonderfully provided them in abundance to us. What more can we need? What more do we ask? Do we need wealth? Do we need the riches of this world? I say no, we do not need them, for we have something far greater already, it is granted to us for the sake of Jesus Christ: it is Jerusalem the golden, Zion, our home in heaven. And it is for this reason that we sang: “The world with wanton pride exalts its sinful pleasures and for them foolishly gives up the heavenly treasures. Let others love the world with all its vanity; I love the Lord, my God. What is the world to me! My Jesus is my Treasure, my Life, my Health, my Wealth, my Friend, my Love, my Pleasure, my Joy, my Crown, my All, my Bliss eternally. Once more, then, I declare: what is the world to me!” (TLH 430:6, 8) Amen.