

Proper 14 Year C

“for where your treasure is there your heart will be also”

I have learned recently that it is much easier to write or speak to an audience that generally shares your own views or at least understands one's ethos...preaching to the choir, as it were....than it is to send one's writing into the public sphere. When I preach or write within the realm of All Saints, I always get a favorable comment or two....sometimes polite questioning or even disagreement, but the response is always respectful and ingenuous... and I very much appreciate that.

Not so in the public sphere. As many of you know I wrote recently an article for Al. com. I chose to write it in the context of the killing of Trayvon Martin. I didn't dwell on the trial, but focused on the vast violence in our world...and tried to make the point that it is the way of Christ alive and active in our communities and the world which will stand against such prolific violence. This was in the religion section so I felt obligated to base my conclusions on scripture....now another thing I have learned, that if in the public sphere an perhaps more specifically the public sphere of Alabama, if you use the word myth and Genesis in the same sentence, you're asking for trouble....Al.com got some sixty plus comments....95% of which were negative and some even vitriolic....thankfully I got a lot of positive comments from you....but the other thing I discovered among the comments, that not only were people offended by my use of the word myth, Genesis being a myth describing how violence entered, and enters the world...but they were also offended that I was meddling in the public sphere. (I did make the comment that carrying concealed weapons is hard to square with the way of Christ) many of the comments argued that churches have no business speaking out on public policy, that we are to keep to ourselves on our personal road to salvation.

I sometimes wonder if these people have actually read the gospels... In all the gospels, Luke no exception, we are charged, called to act in our world for the good of the social and economic order....we are to critic what is awry, and we are to proclaim what is for the good of the whole. It's really that simple, that is not to say that discerning what's awry and what's good for us is simple.... But each gospel writer has their own take on this same theme.

So let's look at Luke again as a whole, as we've been doing off and on this year.... I think we do well to understand these short lectionary passages

with the overall context of the gospel writer in front of us, so another brief review.... and then we'll look at today's passage.... First of all, Mary's song at the beginning of this gospel sets the theme; every following passage is subordinate to Mary's song....that God's coming kingdom will be a social and economic reordering...a dramatic change from corrupt power at the top of the socio economic pyramid into a mutual, egalitarian society who shares the great abundance that God has provided for us....Luke's job is to give us hints as to what this kingdom will look like on the ground, as it were....and look to the means of how to get there....the second major theme in Luke is prayer, and we talked about this a few weeks ago, but it bears I think repeating....for Luke's community, and in the ancient world for that matter... prayer is not asking God for something....a one way conversation which we say with our proverbial fingers crossed....no, Prayer is a predisposition of watchfulness, a predisposition of being conscious of the world around us....I, as you know like to call prayer the art of paying attention....the Buddhists call it mindfulness....that's a good word....but prayer at its essence is a way of life, and it is not without action. It is active in our world embodied by the faithful...not passive and withdrawn, but active and alive... and it is through prayer that God's coming commonweal is hastened....the third theme I want to hold up is urgency....for Luke there is an intense urgency that this new order come for the sake of the unsaved... that is to say, for the sake of those who lack well being and dignity, and their need is urgent...I see it in the people down and out who frequent our office...power about to be cut off...water about to be cut off, on and on.

I want to suggest that all three of these themes are at play in just these mere eight lines in our passage for today....first it is obvious that urgency is in Luke's mind....sell your possessions (you won't need them in this new world order about to arrive) Be dressed for action; have your lamps lit....and then he speaks of this predisposition of prayer....ready for action, lamps lit waiting fully conscious for the master to return from the wedding banquet so that the moment he comes the slaves are poised to let him in the house without delay...see how this intermingles....this is Luke at his literary best....and then finally....and this just floored me because I've never recognized it before in this passage...as to the theme of the way the kingdom, the way the commonweal will be....we find at the heart and in the energy of this parable....when the master comes home to his household of watchful slaves...what happens? Quite the unexpected... The master fastens his belt, throws them a banquet, and serves THEM....an image of the commonweal of God ...an image of freedom and dignity....and image of the equality and commonality of our humanity....master becomes servant and

the enslaved are raised up and as Mary in the Magnificat puts it, they are filled with good things....aside from the feeding of the five thousand....this is another feeding story that speaks of this gracious commonweal, this great change in the socio-economic fabric of the world as we know it, waiting urgently to be born.

The story has implications for ministry as well....we are to be watchful and act upon such watchfulness, living lives of prayer....and we are to go to the slaves of our world in whatever form such slavery takes in our day and age, and we are to become servants of these slaves bearing to them dignity and well being, raising them up....such is the treasure God has in store for us....the treasure of loving service, the treasure of loving our neighbor as ourselves, and not only will our hearts be present in our serving, but they will be brimful with the vast love of God.