

THE HOPE JOURNAL

LEARNING TO LOVE, TOGETHER



August 7, 2022

MATERIAL

how we separate ourselves from our values

by Drew Downs

We have a phrase: the real world.

It's a way of describing the difference between what is going on in our heads, our academic discussions, or our imaginations and what is going on *materially*. As in what is happening "in reality."

Sometimes the separation between our goals and our material conditions reveals a lot about our true values.

When we say we love the poor and yet spend a lot of money on new clothes for ourselves, are we *really* showing love?

Similarly, if we value equality in thought but tolerate inequality in our community, it literally doesn't *matter* which we value on the inside when the outside doesn't match.

Followers of Jesus are called to care more about people than stuff. In the real world.

ORDINARY TIME

Summer 2022

WHAT'S GOING ON

*"You know we've got to find a way
To bring some loving here today".*

-Marvin Gaye

Disciples, Apostles, and Saints!

I remember that feeling I had ten years ago, walking into the church, overwhelmed with dread (what did I miss?). All the rest of vacation vacated my heart in an instant.

I unlocked the office and stared at the desk. Now, I knew there'd be a pile. And I knew I'd have to make my way through it. But it wasn't as tall as I'd imagined. Nor was it as difficult to wade through. But it also, wasn't nothing. It felt no less like a weight.

And yet...church happened. The people did what they were going to do.

Of course, some skipped. Which is always kind of funny. And I'd hear throughout the week about someone's frustration and another's new idea. But mostly the genuine appreciation and the well-wishing that accompanies returns and reunitions.

For many, the opportunity to go away, to visit family, or to just get time to rest and relax and unplug from all of the junk is not possible. And certainly for most of us, it is not possible *enough*.

I would love to hear from you (maybe next week, after I've gotten back in the groove) about some of your dreams. And especially how we all might live a bit more of a vacation-like life every day.

With love,
Drew

ORDINARY TIME

Summer 2022

FOR SUNDAY

Ninth Sunday after Pentecost

August 7, 2022

Collect

Grant to us, Lord, we pray, the spirit to think and do always those things that are right, that we, who cannot exist without you, may by you be enabled to live according to your will; through Jesus Christ our Lord, who lives and reigns with you and the Holy Spirit, one God, for ever and ever.

Amen.

Reading

From Luke 12:32-40

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

Reflection

Last week we had Jesus admonishing the collection of possessions. Now we're hearing the encouragement to his disciples that they sell their possessions and give alms. We can count these among the kinds of ideas that we know and also wish Jesus didn't say.

But he did. And we are left to wrestle with just how *literally* to take that command.

Most of us will reason we need to take it *somewhat* literally. Or at least, in the operative sense, **more** literally than we do now. That we should give more and accumulate less.

ORDINARY TIME

As someone who has practiced minimalism, this idea is certainly attractive and familiar. Because we know *less is more*.

I also don't think we'll find a "right" answer this way. We're too bound up in unsatisfying solutions.

Jesus's focus on urgency, however, drives both concepts home. Because we are called to reject the idea of being possessed by our possessions, getting rid of what is weighing us down, and giving from our wealth to those in need. And we are also called to act *now*.

I suspect the urgency of giving, of attuning our heart to generosity over accumulation is given a command of *immediately* because it is so easy to put it off. We might claim I can be generous *tomorrow*. Until tomorrow comes and we say, *oh jeez, well, I'll do it tomorrow, then*.

Jesus seems to be joining these ideas around a sense of now so that we fully grasp just how much who we *are* (as in identity) is built around who we are in *daily* activity. Not unlike how "we are what we eat". We are what we give away. Or accumulate.

Jesus is inviting his followers to **be** people who are not possessed by possessions. Who give generously to protect the poor. And who make Jesus's generous Way of Love to be their way in the world.

I'm continuously reminded of the wisdom that I tell myself often. And it fits here:

- The best time to do something was earlier.
- The second best time to do it is now.

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