

THE HOPE JOURNAL

LEARNING TO LOVE, TOGETHER



September 4, 2022

POSSESSIONS

stuff is just stuff

by Drew Downs

Jesus has a lot to say about possessions. And usually it's to get rid of them.

This causes all sorts of feelings from people. Mostly fear and anxiety. Like the Pious Young Man. When Jesus tells him to sell his possessions and give the money to the poor, he runs away crying.

What makes something a possession is not that it exists in the world. It is that somebody

claims to own it. It is quite literally possessed. And that, as a word, *always* evokes demons for me. Which helps. A lot.

Possession is not neutral or natural. It is not about progenitors and opportunity. It is *always* about holding on and protecting.

Loosing the bonds of what we possess doesn't just offer others freedom. We also grant it to ourselves.

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!

In the last year we've had a few acts of vandalism of our building. A few small markings with a permanent marker on an exterior wall, the doors of the blessing box were broken, the blessing box was pushed over, and then last week, two of our windows were broken. Any of these is distressing. Taken together, there is little doubt that this is all quite painful.

Some of this is easily fixed. Some will take some work (and money). But none of it is convenient.

I'll confess that I've struggled with how to feel about it all myself. I suspect my own response aligns with yours, for the most part. Sad. Mad. Fear. Worry. Pity.

As a priest and rector, however, I'm mindful of *more* than our reactions. I'm mindful of what we *do* with those reactions. How we as a community process them. And I worry about the way grief and anxiety can affect *any* of our decisions.

The remarkable part of Jesus's teachings is that they are all designed to pull us out of our Amygdala: the part of our brain that processes everything as either fight or flight. For our protection, it makes us choose between running away or destroying. Jesus commands us to walk a *different* path. To not succumb to fear or anger. To choose, instead, to love. And to stand up in the face of adversity.

We are fixing what is broken and looking at security solutions, which are *thoughtful* responses to the moment. But so is remaining visible to our community. Offering hope, love, and even forgiveness.

With love,
Drew

ORDINARY TIME

Summer 2022

FOR SUNDAY

Thirteenth Sunday after Pentecost

September 4, 2022

Collect

Grant us, O Lord, to trust in you with all our hearts; for, as you always resist the proud who confide in their own strength, so you never forsake those who make their boast of your mercy; through Jesus Christ our Lord, who lives and reigns with you and the Holy Spirit, one God, now and for ever.

Amen.

Reading

From Luke 14:25–33

"So therefore, none of you can become my disciple if you do not give up all your possessions."

Reflection

If we were just jumping into the story here, I suspect we'd have some questions. And assumptions. But if we've been following along from the beginning, we have far fewer of both.

This isn't the first time Jesus has spoken of division. We covered that three weeks ago. Back when he said he came to divide—because we can't stay in a family that refuses to move when we are called to follow.

The teaching Jesus offers next masquerades as a proverb. Which is a kind of sensible advice for life.

ORDINARY TIME

The thing about proverbs, however, is that they're essentially agnostic. Wisdom that comes from outside the faith tradition that may nonetheless be true.

This teaching has that kind of universal quality. Jesus certainly seems to be making that appeal. But I suspect, again, if we haven't been following along, that we'll read this as just more good advice. Rather than an explanation of why the sacrifice that accompanies discipleship is *also* sensible.

But most important is the concluding claim: that we must give up all our possessions.

These are not disconnected or separate ideas, but iterations of the same one. That the path to the Kin-dom that they are all on is a life of commitment and sacrifice. It requires choices, movement, and change.

And most importantly, we can't *expect* to take anything with us.

The point isn't so much to *have* few possessions, but be prepared to give *anything* up for the sake of the Gospel.

For some, this means literal possessions. Because they have a lot of stuff and invest a lot of themselves into those things.

For others, it means the relationships they accumulated. Friends and family who are not helping them live a Kin-dom-fueled life.

But I suspect that for most of us, our greatest possession is certainty and being right. That sense of commitment to way things are and the ways we need to fix them. This can even include traumas and baggage. Commitments to ways of life that are deeply-rooted. Perhaps even these need to be on the table. Or, perhaps, in the garbage. So we can adopt a more Kin-dom-centered life.

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