

I speak to you today in the name of one God, Father, Son, and Holy Spirit. Amen. Please be seated.

- Re-read Psalm
- Wealth and riches will be in their house, *
and their righteousness will last for ever.
 - Sounds like the “righteous” will receive wealth and riches, like that is the reward for living a Godly life
 - Easy to assume that this is how you tell whether a person (whether I?) am righteous: who has wealth? Who has riches?
 - And then easy to assume: the person *without* wealth is not righteous enough. They have done something wrong. They (I?) are struggling financially because they (I?) are not righteous enough in God’s eyes.
 - STOP. This is a dangerous cycle of judgement. The prosperity gospel.
 - Problem: only looking at a small sliver of God’s economy.
- God’s economy: how God desires us to relate with each other, God’s vision for resource, relationship, and yes, money.

- Part of God's economy is blessing - including financial blessing.
 - When we have the ability to feed ourselves, our families - when we have a roof over our head, we should give thanks to God for this blessing.
- But hear Paul's caution in today's reading:
 - "Keep your lives free from the love of money"
 - We can get into an unhealthy relationship with money when we equate riches with blessing. That lures us into a cycle where we desire more blessing (of course!) and that means more wealth
 - That cycle is inward facing, individualistic: *I* receive blessing from God when *my* bank account is fuller. When *my particular* family feels more secure.
 - When we get here, stop. Pause. Zoom out. Remember the whole message of scripture. Jesus says the whole thing hangs on two commandments: Love God, love your neighbor. He calls us to turn from ourselves, from our immediate life - turn outward in love.
- Return to the psalm:
 - 112:3 Wealth and riches will be in their house, *
and their righteousness will last for ever.

- BUT 112:9 They have given freely to the poor, *
and their righteousness stands fast for ever;
they will hold up their head with honor.
- These two verses complete each other.
- What does it mean to be righteous? Not just to receive blessing
- the righteous receive, and they give. Not just give, but give
freely. Give with abandon. Give to the point that it may seem
unwise.
- This is God's economy: Give thanks to God for financial
blessing, and immediately turn outward to give. Because we are
not individuals adrift at sea, fighting one another for scraps -
even if it feels like that sometimes. The true reality, revealed in
the word of Scripture and the Word in Jesus Christ, is that we
live with and for one another. Righteousness and blessings
shine in community.
- And God shows us this economy by personal example. God
has a wealth that cannot be measured by money - the fountain
of creation itself, the Word in whom we live and breathe and
have our being, holiness beyond our comprehension. And what
did God do with all this abundance, all these riches?

- He became incarnate as a human being, to give himself for us in his living ministry and in death, his sacrifice on the cross.

God gives it all away, to us.

- We can never repay such a monumental gift - and that's the whole point. Generosity is not a matter of utility. God gives his whole self, sacrifices everything, for us. Not because we deserve it, not because we've earned it, not because God expects repayment (how could he? By comparison, we're flat broke!)
 - Jesus sacrifices himself for us out of infinite, immeasurable, irrational love.
 - That's why he teaches us in today's gospel:
 - "When you give a banquet, invite the poor, the crippled, the lame, and the blind. And you will be blessed, because they cannot repay you, for you will be repaid at the resurrection of the righteous."
- This is not a lesson only for the rich - this is a lesson for every hand that touches money. All of our hands, mine and yours. Remember the Widow's Mite: Jesus praises a widow for giving even a tiny amount out of her poverty. Life is filled with blessing, but it is also filled with struggle. Struggle to make a living. Struggle to survive.

- In our culture, money always comes with emotion. Often, it's why we don't talk about it. Money is really stressful: it's tied up with self worth, with purpose, with pride, with guilt, with survival. All those feelings can lead us, in extremes, to lock in on our personal situations. There is no shame in that. Hear me: there is no shame in making sure you and your family have what you need.
- What we are hearing in the scriptures today, what we hear in the Gospel, is Christ's invitation to expand our circles of generosity. Because even in struggle - maybe especially in struggle - we rely on each other. We cannot afford to live as individuals, adrift, alone.
- Let's do as Jesus does. Let us recognize every gift we receive, and bless God. Let us give thanks to God and one another for the food in our bellies and the roof over our head, whenever we are lucky enough to receive such blessings. And let us seek to give to others in need like Christ gives: freely, abundantly, irrationally - expecting nothing in return.