



# LOGOS

The Newsletter for St. John's Episcopal Church, Arlington

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"The light shines in the darkness and the darkness did not overcome it." John 1:5

## **From the Rector: Loving the Selves We Are**

What are we human beings made of? There are lots of answers.

Some physicists say we are made of the dust of the cosmos come together in just the right way, molecule by molecule. The medical explanation says that we are blood and bones and flesh and organs and all the other things that make up drawings on the walls of doctors's offices. We have this in common with the rest of the animal kingdom. The evolutionary explanation is that we are descendants of our fellow primates, the apes, in some way, and that we branched off eons ago to become our own species, differentiating ourselves from other animals. René Descartes thought a mark of our humanity was our rational thought: "I think, therefore I am."

Of course, there are metaphorical explanations of what humans are as well. When I was a little girl my mother used to read to us many nights. One of the little poems we learned as we were growing up is about what little boys and little girls were made of. Little girls were sugar and spice and everything nice. Little boys were snips and snails and puppy dog tails. While I'm not sure this poem would pass inspection in this day and age, in the 1950s and early 1960s roles and characteristics were still well defined for the sexes, even as children.

Another way to look at ourselves is that we are the sum total of our experiences. Not too long ago, I ran across a story on the Internet, and although I don't usually pick up on these, I thought this one was helpful. A daughter is telling her mother everything that is going wrong in her life—she's failing algebra, her boyfriend broke up with her and a friend is moving away. Her mother, who is baking a cake, asks if she would like a snack and the daughter says yes. So the mother offers her cooking oil, eggs, flour, and baking soda and the daughter says those are yucky things. Yes, the mother says, but when they are put together in the right way they make a delicious cake.

The story goes on to say that God works the same way. Many times we wonder why God lets us suffer or go through bad times. And we really don't always know why. But we do know that God can work through all things for good, and our experiences good and bad make us the human being we are, which is truly something wonderful.

This story puts God in the mix of making us who we are, and the spiritual explanation is the most important part for us as Christians. The Bible is our source for who we are. It tells us we are God's creation, brought forth through God's Word and the Holy Spirit's breath at a time of God's choosing. In Genesis, the Bible tells us that the Lord formed us from the dust of the ground and breathed into our nostrils the breath of life so we became living

beings. It tells us that we are made in the image and likeness of God. The Bible tells us that God loves us and wants to be in relationship with us always. It tells us that we are God's children. It tells us that God is with us wherever we go and whatever we are going through.

We know that God acts with us, helping us handle our lives' joys and challenges. We know that God acts for us, loving us and forgiving us, showing us grace and mercy and compassion. What we do not know so well is how to do for ourselves what God does for us. We have to learn to show the same love to the selves we are, however we think of ourselves, as God does for us. This thinking brings us into closer relationship with God and our fellow human beings. It keeps us from practicing self-destructive and other-destructive behavior.

One of the ways we can love ourselves more is to stop thinking negatively about ourselves. We can stop thinking of ourselves as stupid, bad or worthless people. We do it more often than we realize, and it builds in us a great well of shame. Of course sometimes we sin, but it is the behavior and not the person, that has failed God in some way. We can learn to be non-judgmental about ourselves. It is hard to think of ourselves without putting a value judgment on us as a human being at that moment, but with practice we can. We can say, "I like to do things this way," or "I need this" or "This would work better for me" and not think our preferences are bad. They are just our preferences and we are being honest about them.

Another sure way to self-defeating behavior is to put ourselves on a ladder and compare ourselves to other people. We are all on an equal footing with God, and God does not compare us one against another; God loves us each for ourselves. Putting ourselves on a ladder makes us feel less than or better than others, skewing our relationship with our fellow human beings. In addition, we are often comparing our insides to someone else's outsides and that will never work. Though another person may not show it on the outside, everyone has fears and worries about themselves and how they come across to others.

Many of us are in the habit of negative thinking. We look at everything, including ourselves with a "Yes, but..." attitude. Someone compliments us and we do

not know how to thank them gracefully for something that may be true, so we denigrate the compliment. Some of us are constantly worried that the other shoe might drop, that we should not be so happy or it will never last. I was so surprised to read somewhere that negative thinking is a delusion that we have to get rid of. A very positive thing is just as likely to happen as a negative thing. We can help the most positive thing happen by opening our hearts and minds to God and asking to have the best possible perspective on our situation.

One of the hardest things we have to do is forgive ourselves when we have done something wrong. Jesus died to redeem us from all sins, even ones that had not been thought of yet. God has forgiven us because we have asked but we might not be able to give ourselves the same grace and let what we have done go. We are human and we do wrong things. If Jesus told Peter to forgive someone who sinned against him not seven times, but seventy times seven, we can surely apply the same command to ourselves. Sometimes the only thing holding us back from healing is our own ability to be hard on ourselves.

Sometimes the inability to forgive ourselves goes with something else we have to let go of: perfectionism. We may not even expect others to be perfect, while we expect ourselves never to make a mistake or commit a sin. We are trying very hard to follow the rules all the time, just as the Pharisees did, trying to earn our salvation when we cannot. That is where God's grace comes in, and we simply have to accept that Jesus' death on the Cross is what has saved us, not anything we can do.

It is often hard to love, accept and care for the selves we are. We experience all kinds of blocks to God's loving care when we fail to treat ourselves gently and tenderly as God treats us, as Jesus treated people when he was on earth. We are flesh and blood, but we are also God's children and heirs of God's eternal kingdom through Christ. We were created in God's image and likeness, and it is our lifelong journey to see ourselves as God sees us: people worthy of love and grace and forgiveness.

Ann†

## **Glencarlyn Day a Success**

It was a beautiful if hot day on June 6 for Glencarlyn Day. The annual parade, this year with a safari theme, began at St. John's and finished at Carlin Hall. Other traditional activities such as the pancake breakfast on Saturday morning, the potluck supper on Friday night and the block party on Friday night drew crowds of neighbors to renew old friendships and create new ones.

On Saturday morning, St. John's held its annual hot dog roast. For the first time Cristo Rey participated, bringing Latino food, lemonade, and other drinks. We also began an international food festival. This year we had one booth, serving smoothies and Latino food. Cristo Rey and St. John's are splitting the proceeds of Glencarlyn day. We made \$152 net from the hot dog roast; our total intake will be \$279.

## **Congratulations to Our Students**

Alexis Lodsun graduated from Wakefield High School on June 24. She is very excited to be attending the Savannah College of Art and Design. She is interested in Fashion Merchandising and Jewelry Design, as well as all of the other artistic pursuits that SCAD has to offer, including their campus in Lacoste, France. Alexis has focused on creative activities at Wakefield. She participated in several theatre productions, with roles in *High School Musical* and *Dearly Departed*, and has been involved in the production of the yearbook for the past two years. She also participated in the Signature in the Schools program for two years, doing lighting last year, and had one of a handful of parts in this year's production of *Shakespeare, Will*. Alexis is a recipient of the Wakefield Fine Arts Scholarship for 2010. She will be working at Old Navy Potomac Yards until she heads to Savannah in September.

Laura Wallace is going to Edinburgh, Scotland, in September to do her Master's Degree. She writes the following about her plans:

"I've been really blessed in finding St. John's, you have been a wonderful church family for me over the past two years. I can't thank the choir enough for having me and I will miss Thursday night choir practices—even when it was a very small group of Lynn, Marshall, Carol and I, we always had fun and made a joyful noise or two."

Congratulations, Alexis. Laura, we are happy for you but will miss you.

## **Morning Guild's Annual Tea a Great Success**

On Saturday, May 8, the St. John's Morning Guild presented its annual tea complete with renowned scones baked by Carole Hunt, various tea sandwiches, cakes, fruit tarts, cookies, deviled eggs and fruit specialties. All accompanied with a large variety of gourmet teas and champagne. The Tea was a huge success, evidenced by the need to set up extra tables for the crowd.

A special "thank you" goes out to all the guild members, church members, and friends of the church who baked, produced, supported, contributed, served, poured, decorated, and went the extra mile to make our event a success. A portion of the proceeds will go to the improvement of the church building and grounds.

## **A Greeting from Bishop Lee**

When Carole and Del Hunt were on the West Coast, they stopped by Grace Cathedral in San Francisco to see Bishop Lee, who is serving there as interim dean. He was not present when they called but he sent a letter to Del conveying his appreciation to him and to all of St. John's:

Dear Del:

I was sorry to miss you when you visited Grace Cathedral. I remember St. John's Church, Arlington, as a warm and welcoming congregation. Please convey to them my warmest good wishes.

Faithfully yours,

Peter James Lee  
Interim Dean

## **LOGOS**

The LOGOS is published nine times a year in February, March, April, May, July, September, October, November, and December near the beginning of the month.

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*The next deadline is Thursday, August 19 at 10 am.*

## Vestry Highlights

### April Vestry Meeting

**Glencarlyn Day (Saturday, June 5)** Kim Houghton described plans for renting space to food vendors, splitting the money evenly between St. John's and Cristo Rey. The idea is to have an international food fair. In addition, the Vestry approved having a 50/50 raffle that day, splitting the proceeds 50% with Cristo Rey, who will also sell raffle tickets.

**Glencarlyn Citizen's Association (GCA)** Ann announced that Pamela Corey-Archer would represent St. John's at the GCA meetings.

**Supply Clergy and Music** An anonymous donor has provided funds to cover Ann's absences (with the Altar Guild providing funds for one of the Sundays). Also, music is now covered during Carol Dunlap's vacation.

**Trees** The Vestry approved accepting Ricky's Tree Services's bid to spray, fertilize, and prune trees for \$900. The funds will come from Glencarlyn Day, savings on heat, and a possible donation from the Morning Guild.

**Furnace Repairs** Del Hunt, Junior Warden, reported on repairs necessary to keep the furnace working. During April and October, months with fluctuating temperatures, Del will monitor the weather and turn the heat and air conditioner on/off as necessary.

**Gutters** The gutters and adjoining areas on the roof suffered damage during the recent snow and ice storm. This has been repairs, at a cost of \$1,975, of which the church's insurance company has paid all but \$500.

### May Vestry Meeting

**Steeple Panels** Valerie Wilson presented designs for the four panels in the steeple. The original panels are over thirty years old and have served very well, lasting much longer than originally thought when done by Jack Turner and his sons as an Eagle Scout project. These new panels will build on the concepts of the existing panels, being bright and colorful, keeping the symbols and the words "To the Glory of God." New themes of St. John's are added: the importance of family and the congregation as family. Valerie is donating her labor; St. John's will pay for the materi-

als, which Valerie estimates will cost between \$300 and \$400.

The Vestry thanked Valerie for her excellent work; final approval was postponed to the June meeting to give Ann, Del, and Paul (and anyone else interested) the chance to view the design panels.

**Gifts** Brian asked if there should be a policy regarding gifts for parishioners who "retire" after long service or who leave St. John's. The consensus was that, as there are so many variables, to continue to address this on an *ad hoc* basis.

**Building** Brian Cavey said that groups using the church were leaving lights on; Bill Thomson added that fire doors were being left open. Brian will draft a letter to be sent to all who use the building with instructions to: turn off lights, close fire doors, close windows, and lock outside doors. Liz suggested this also be included in the building use policy being developed.

**Spring Tea** The Morning Guild took in \$1,371 at its Spring Tea on May 8th—a record amount.

**Glencarlyn Day** Four food vendors have signed up. Bill Thomson is coordinating the sale of hot dogs and beverages. Debbie suggested placing signs on Carolyn Springs Rd. to publicize the events; Brian Cavey will check on GCA plans for signage and let Diane and Bryan Harbin know. Signs are also needed to publicize the choir's book sale.

**Supply Clergy/Morning Prayer** Although the issue of having supply clergy in Ann's absence is resolved, some parishioners have expressed a desire for having morning prayer. Patricia suggested offering this during Advent week, in conjunction with the other Region 3 churches. Further discussion was postponed until June.

**Trustee** Chris Van Wyk has moved and therefore is no longer available to serve as a trustee, leaving Lynn Robinson and Carolyn Corlett to serve. Unless there is a reason to have more than two trustees, the Vestry decided not to replace Chris.

**Vision** Del has suggested that the Vestry spend some time at each meeting on the St. John's vision and ideas for implementing it. Brian Cavey asked Vestry members to let him know their ideas on this and there will be further discussion at the June meeting.

## **Parish News**

### **Congratulations**

To Laura Wallace, who leaves in September to study for her Master's Degree in Edinburgh, Scotland

To Alexis Lodsun, who graduated from Wakefield High School June 24

To Jane Edwards on the birth of her granddaughter, Lorelai Sage Davies, on April 21

### **Rest in Peace**

Cathy Young, a former parishioner, who entered the life of the Resurrection on May 26, 2010

Marge Stenger, mother of Paul Stenger, who entered the life of the Resurrection on May 7, 2010

### **Thank you**

To the choir who wrapped up its season on June 13. They will be back with us on September 12.

To Carol Dunlap, for the musical gifts she shares with us every Sunday

To our youth Sunday School teachers for the year: Carrie Harbin, Diane Henderson, Del Hunt and Leslie Mead

To our Children's Chapel teacher Valeria Antelo

To our Adult Forum teachers: Lorraine Underwood, Bill Schenck, and Faye Pritchard

To Lynn Christopher for carrying our Pentecost streamers

To Laura Wallace, Kay Wells, Penny and Don Hess, Liz White, Carolyn Corlett and everyone who helped set up, clean up or helped in any way on the day of the choir book sale, as well as those who donated books, CDs, LPs and videos for the choir to sell and all who bought books.

To all who helped with the Glencarlyn Day hot dog stand: Henry Carter, Bill and Faye Pritchard, Jeff Wallace, Bill Schenck, Kim Houghton, Bill Thomson, Joan Blake and Liz White.

To Bryan Harbin and Bill Pritchard who put our sign back up at Route 50 and Carlin Springs Road

To Debbie Carter for coordinating "Potlucks with a Purpose"

To Carolyn Corlett and Debbie Carter for coordinating our ice cream social

To Diane Henderson, who will coordinate our "Movies Under the Stars" night on July 17

### **Spring UTO Ingathering**

Thanks to everyone who contributed to our Spring Ingathering for the United Thank Offering. Your generosity provided \$165 for the good work supported by the UTO.

### **July and August Birthdays**

July 6	Matt Lodsun
July 7	Thomas Held
July 9	Nolan Baynham
July 10	Henry Carter
July 13	Ray O'Connor
July 14	Justiniano Garay
July 15	Brian Cavey
July 16	Klaus Held
July 16	Marion Reed
July 23	Michael Beavin
July 23	Kenji McCartney
July 26	Alexis Hart
July 26	Helen Naw Mumu
July 27	Dennis Eckhout
July 27	Patrick Sheehan Rawls
July 29	Bill Pritchard
August 2	Carolyn Corlett
August 6	Virginia Pearson
August 7	Paul Petrich
August 9	Harriet Sheehan Rawls
August 10	Janice Hull
August 10	Lynn Robinson
August 16	Carol Bogart
August 17	Sarah Vistica
August 19	Josh Cullen
August 21	Lorraine Underwood
August 22	Simon Van Wyk
August 22	John Wilson
August 25	Nancy Gibb
August 26	Marshall Adair
August 27	Anne Kaylor
August 29	McKenzie Hart

### **Anniversaries**

July 3	The Rev. Sue & Rob Hardman
July 6	Sheryl & Jaime Pardo
August 21	Sharon & Jones Tallent

## St. John's Calendar

### July

- Sun 4 Sixth Sunday after Pentecost  
Holy Eucharist Rite I, 8 a.m.  
Holy Eucharist Rite II, 10 a.m.
- Mon 5 Independence Day Holiday (observed)  
Office Closed
- Sun 11 Seventh Sunday after Pentecost  
Holy Eucharist Rite I, 8 a.m.  
Holy Eucharist Rite II, 10 a.m.
- Mon 12 Bible Study, 2 p.m.
- Sat 17 Men's Fellowship, 8 a.m.  
Movies Under the Stars, 9:00 p.m.
- Sun 18 Eighth Sunday after Pentecost  
Holy Eucharist Rite I, 8 a.m.  
Holy Eucharist Rite II, 10 a.m.
- Mon 19 Bible Study, 2 p.m.
- Sun 25 Ninth Sunday after Pentecost  
Holy Eucharist Rite I, 8 a.m.  
Holy Eucharist Rite II, 10 a.m..
- Mon 26 Bible Study, 2 p.m.

### August

- Sun 1 Tenth Sunday after Pentecost  
Holy Eucharist Rite I, 8 a.m.  
Holy Eucharist Rite II, 10 a.m.
- Mon 2 Bible Study, 2 p.m.
- Sun 8 Eleventh Sunday after Pentecost  
Holy Eucharist Rite I, 8 a.m.  
Holy Eucharist Rite II, 10 a.m.
- Mon 9 Bible Study, 2 p.m.
- Tue 10 Vestry Meeting, 7 p.m.
- Sun 15 Twelfth Sunday after Pentecost  
Holy Eucharist Rite I, 8 a.m.  
Holy Eucharist Rite II, 10 a.m.
- Mon 16 Bible Study, 2 p.m.
- Sun 22 Thirteenth Sunday after Pentecost  
Holy Eucharist Rite I, 8 a.m.  
Holy Eucharist Rite II, 10 a.m.
- Mon 23 Bible Study, 2 p.m.
- Sun 29 Fourteenth Sunday after Pentecost  
Holy Eucharist Rite I, 8 a.m.  
Holy Eucharist Rite II, 10 a.m.
- Mon 30 Bible Study, 2 p.m.

## Farewell to the McCartneys

With heavy hearts we say goodbye to the McCartney family – Kenji, Conner, Kaipo and Keith—as they leave for their new assignments in Hawaii. God's blessings go with you. You have meant much to all of us at St. John's and we will miss you.

### St. John's Mission Statement

To discover and share the transforming love of Christ

### St. John's Vision Statement

St. John's is dedicated to making disciples for Jesus through

- attracting and welcoming newcomers;
- sharing faith-deepening worship, education, outreach, and pastoral care; and
- together carrying God's vision of the kingdom into the world around us.

## Why Trinity Sunday

*by Bill Schenck*

We celebrated Trinity Sunday on May 30. Why? After all, as Ann said in her sermon, the Trinity is not mentioned in the Bible. It's not like Pentecost (the previous Sunday) which celebrates an actual Biblical event.

According to the Oxford Dictionary of the Christian Church, Trinity Sunday was not celebrated until the Middle Ages. It was introduced to mark the conclusion of the commemoration of the life of Christ and the descent of the Holy Spirit. It became official in 1334 when Pope John XXII proclaimed it a feast day. It was especially popular in England as it marked the day that Sir Thomas Beckett was consecrated a bishop in 1162.

## **Gospel Lessons for July and August, 2010**

### **July 4, 2010, Sixth Sunday after Pentecost**

**Luke 10:1-11,16-20**

As Jesus has sent out the twelve disciples on a missionary journey within Israel, he now sends others on a mission beyond, for “seventy” is the traditional Jewish number of nations of the world. The seventy are “like lambs into the midst of wolves” (v. 3): (1) they are defenceless before hostile people; and (2) Christ inaugurates an era of peace and reconciliation in which “the wolf and the lamb shall feed together” (Isaiah 65:25). They need to commence without delay (“carry no purse ...”, v. 4) and concentrate on the mission (“greet no one ...”). When you find a receptive person, a person of peace, God’s peace will be on him or her (v. 6). Accept their hospitality (“the labourer deserves to be paid”, v. 7) and “eat what is set before you” (v. 8, i.e. ignore Jewish dietary laws). Show by action (healing people) and by telling them the good news that “the kingdom of God has come near to you” (v. 9): it’s partly already here! Vv. 11-16 tell the seventy how to handle hostile situations: tell such people that they will be ignored; the kingdom has come anyway. At the end of the era, they will be judged harshly (v. 12). Then v. 16: in hearing the good news from a disciple, people hear Jesus; if they reject a disciple, they reject Jesus and the Father (“the one who sent me”).

When the seventy return, they tell of their surprise that they have power over evil (v. 17), a power Jesus has explicitly given to the Twelve. Jesus has seen their victory over evil forces; he has given them “authority” (v. 19) over Satan (“the enemy”). (To Jews, “snakes and scorpions” were known sources of evil.) Exorcism, in itself, is not a sign of the arrival of God’s kingdom (v. 20).

### **July 11, 2010, Seventh Sunday after Pentecost**

**Luke 10:25-37**

Jesus has prepared disciples for a missionary journey beyond Israel. He has given them advice on how to introduce receptive people to his message of peace and eternal life, to entry into the Kingdom of God.

Perhaps the “lawyer”, a person expert in the interpretation of Jewish law, has heard Jesus’ words about mission to Gentiles. He asks: How much must I do ...? Jesus speaks to him in his terms (v. 26). The lawyer answers with a verse from Deuteronomy and another

from Leviticus, both books of the Law (v. 27). Jesus echoes a verse in the Law (v. 28). At the time, Jews debated whether all fellow Jews (or just some) were their neighbours. The lawyer seeks to prove his entitlement to eternal life by defining the limits of his duty to neighbours, but Jesus reinterprets the Law in the story of the Good Samaritan (vv. 30-35). The “priest” (v. 31) stands for Jewish religious leadership; Levites (v. 32) assisted priests in the Temple. The man may be dead; if either touches him, he risks ritual defilement. Each keeps the law literally. Jews saw Samaritans as religious deviants, but they did keep the Law; each group despised each other. So for a Samaritan to risk becoming unclean is to act according to the spirit of the Law rather than the letter. (“Oil and wine”, v. 34, were medications.) In v. 37, the lawyer recognizes that the Samaritan has acted properly (but can’t bring himself to say Samaritan.) The neighbour argument is irrelevant. The lawyer must see behind the Law to love of all. Even non-Jews who demonstrate this love can enter the kingdom.

### **July 18, 2010, Eighth Sunday after Pentecost**

**Luke 10:38-42**

Luke emphasizes that Christ came for all: all sectors of society, all peoples, and both sexes. Samaritans, despised by Jews, are welcome in the Kingdom. Jesus has told the seventy that proclaiming his message demands unwavering commitment. The lawyer has learnt that his love should be for everyone; if it is, he has eternal life.

Now Jesus crosses Jewish cultural bounds:

- he is alone with women who are not his relatives;
- a woman serves him; and
- he teaches a woman in her own house.

To sit at someone’s feet (v. 39) was to be his disciple. Mary is Jesus’ disciple. Martha, while devoted to her home, is “distracted” (v. 40) by busy-ness. The “only ... thing” (v. 42) that is really needed is to listen to Jesus’ message and proclaim it. This is the task that Mary has chosen; her role is exemplary. Jesus values Martha’s role, but Mary’s is “better”. (The wording of v. 42a varies among early manuscripts. The differences change the interpretation.)

## **July 25, 2010, Ninth Sunday after Pentecost**

### **Luke 11:1-13**

Then and now, a religious community has a distinctive way of praying; ours is exemplified by the Lord's Prayer. In 5:33, Pharisees and scribes have noted that followers of John the Baptist "frequently fast and pray"; now Christians have their own prayer. Luke's version of the Lord's Prayer is shorter than Matthew's (which we use). We approach God in a personal way, as "Father" (v. 2). His "name" is more than just a name: we pray that all may give respect due to him, so all may see his love. "Your kingdom come" looks forward to the Kingdom, where all barriers—of wealth, sex and ritual cleanliness—will no longer exist. Of the five petitions, the last two seek filling of our needs. "Bread" (v. 3) is what we need to live; it is God's gift to us. We share it with all, especially in the Eucharist. "Daily" here means day after day. The "time of trial" (v. 4) is the final onslaught of evil forces, before Christ comes again; it is also the temptations which assail us day-by-day. In vv. 5ff, Jesus tells two stories: even one who is asleep with his family responds "because of ... persistence" to a neighbour in need; a parent provides for a child. Even these people, separated from God, respond to the needs of others. How much more so will God respond to our prayers for help, through the Holy Spirit.

## **August 1, 2010, Tenth Sunday after Pentecost**

### **Luke 12:13-21**

As v. 1 tells us, Jesus has drawn a large crowd; the Parable of the Rich Fool is a lesson for the disciples too (v. 22). As he often does, Jesus speaks to his disciples with others present. The Mishnah, a Jewish book of laws, guided rabbis in how to handle questions of inheritance. (It must have been galling at times that Mosaic law prescribed that an elder son receive twice the inheritance of a younger.) Jesus wants no part in sorting out such issues: the word translated "friend" (v. 14) literally means human, a stern salutation. Jesus explains: "all kinds of greed" (v. 15) have no place in anyone's life; true being (real and meaningful "life") is more than "possessions".

Jesus' story of the farmer is particularly apt for a rural crowd. The farmer's land "yielded a good harvest" (v. 16, Revised English Bible). As the frequent use of "I" in vv. 17-19 shows, he thinks only of himself, of his material well-being. He fools himself into thinking that materi-

ality satisfies his inner being ("soul", v. 19). This example story (unusual because God is a character) does not attack wealth per se, but rather amassing wealth solely for one's own enjoyment. Purely selfish accumulation of wealth is incompatible with discipleship. God calls the farmer a "fool" (v. 20) for ignoring his relationship with him. Earthly riches are transient, but a time of reckoning is coming, when we will all be judged by God. This time may be when we die or at the end of time, or both. We must trust in God, leaving the future in his hands. Jesus makes his point by providing an absurd example: materialism can get in the way of godliness. (The crowd would recall that, in the Old Testament and in the Apocrypha, foolishness often has overtones of immorality, of deviating from God's ways.)

## **August 8, 2010, Eleventh Sunday after Pentecost**

### **Luke 12:32-40**

Jesus has told his disciples, in the presence of a large crowd, the story of the farmer who, keeping all of his huge harvest for himself, completely obliterated God from his life. Wealth per se is acceptable, but abusing it is not. To "strive for his kingdom" (v. 31) is much more important than acquisition of material goods: "life is more than food" (v. 23). Trust in God's care of you! He knows what you need, and will give it you. Now Jesus calls his disciples "little flock" (v. 32), for they are few, and oppressed ("do not be afraid"). (In Ezekiel 34, God speaks of his people as his "flock".) They will be citizens of "the kingdom". Avoid overattachment to "possessions" (v. 33) and share what you have with the needy ("give alms"). Emphasize your relationship with God, not material wealth; integrity with him lasts, but wealth ends with the grave. In vv. 35-40, Jesus tells a parable about vigilance and loyalty. Jews expected a great "banquet" when the Messiah came; Christians recognize this banquet as being with Christ, symbolizing our complete union with him. It will inaugurate fulfilment of the kingdom. The "master" (v. 36) is Christ himself: he serves the slaves at the banquet! ("have them sit down ...", v. 37) (The master will tuck his long Oriental robes into his "belt" to give him freedom of movement to serve them.) Christ, "the Son of Man" (v. 40) like a "thief" (v. 39), may come at any time: you must be ready whenever he comes.

## **August 15, 2010, Twelfth Sunday after Pentecost — Luke 12:49-56**

Luke presents several sayings of Jesus. V. 49 is one saying. “Fire” here is a symbol of purification and separation of the godly from the ungodly. (Gold was separated from the host rock in a fire that had been “kindled”.) He wishes that he was called on to exercise judgment now. In Mark 10:38, Jesus says to James and John: “Are you able to drink the cup that I drink, or be baptized with the baptism that I am baptized with?” This is the sense of “baptism” in v. 50: Jesus is under great “stress” until his “baptism” is completed in suffering death and being raised again. Vv. 51-53 are another saying. After the word “peace”, it helps understanding to add at any cost. Micah used notions like those in vv. 52-53 to tell of the total corruption of the people. Jesus has come for division between godly and ungodly people. Vv. 54-56 present yet another saying. The “crowds” are able to “interpret” (v. 56) signs of impending weather, but they, in spite of seeing signs in the “present time”, fail to see their implications for the end of the era.

## **August 22, 2010, Thirteenth Sunday after Pentecost — Luke 13:10-17**

In the story of the healing of the crippled woman, Jesus shows what it means to be a citizen of God’s kingdom—through his actions. That he heals a woman and refers to her as a “daughter of Abraham” (v. 16), a full member of Jewish society, is remarkable: the kingdom is equally open to women and the sick. In Jesus’ day, physical and mental ailments were seen as the work of evil forces (“Satan”); the very being of someone with a serious ailment was thought to be hostile to God. The woman does not ask to be cured; no one asks on her behalf; Jesus notices her (“Jesus saw her”, v. 12). Her response to his saving action is to praise God (v. 13). Anyone could speak in the synagogue: the “leader” (v. 14) speaks to the “crowd”, but his words are directed at Jesus. He is blind to God’s kingdom.

Jesus’ rebuttal is clever, for while untying an ox or a donkey on the sabbath was forbidden in one part of the Mishnah (a Jewish book of laws), it was permitted in another. Jesus has “set free” (v. 12), untied, the woman who was tied to Satan. If you untie animals on the sabbath, why not humans? Honour and “shame” (v. 17) were, and are, important in Near Eastern

cultures. Realizing that Jesus is right, the “leader” (v. 14) and other “opponents” (v. 17) are shamed before the crowd, who rejoice in this wonder-worker. The kingdom is open to all when they turn to God.

## **August 29, 2010, Fourteenth Sunday after Pentecost — Luke 14:1,7-14**

Luke continues his series of sayings of Jesus about the qualifications for entry into the kingdom of God. The Pharisees believed in the resurrection of the godly at the end of time, and were keen to be among those chosen as faithful, so they “were watching him closely”. As he has done earlier, Jesus heals a person on the sabbath (vv. 2-6), this time one with “dropsy” (edema). The “lawyers and Pharisees” (v. 3), experts on correct observance of the sabbath, are speechless when Jesus challenges them (v. 6): surely acts of compassion can be done on this day. Jesus’ host is a prominent Pharisee (v. 1); we recognize that the “parable” (v. 7) is about membership in the Kingdom. The Greek word rendered as “guests” means apparently chosen or see themselves as chosen. The gathering of God’s elect at the end of time was commonly depicted as a “wedding banquet” (v. 8). There the host is God. The punch line (v. 11) is good manners, but Jesus is drawing a conclusion about the kingdom: attendance depends on God’s invitation. God will not be fooled by self-promotion! Jewish and Greco-Roman societies both spurned the “poor” (v. 13) and the disabled. A Qumran document says that these people will be excluded from the banquet, but Jesus says: share with them! (v. 13) Giving to those unable to “repay” (v. 14) will admit one to the kingdom. For the Pharisee, this is a real surprise. He should have invited the man with dropsy.

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*Next deadline is Thursday, August 19 at 10:00 a.m.*

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