“Investing in Love”

A Sermon by The Rev. Rachel Wildman

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St. Paul’s Episcopal Church, Bedford MA

Scripture reference: Luke 12:32-40

Our Gospel passage today is complicated for me, espcially in this week of ICE raids and xenophobic, racist, acts of terror.

The slavery metaphor is especially troubling—and I’m uncomfortable looking past it for the liberating Word of God. White people have looked past the metaphors, monuments, and language of slavery to considerable harm for decades.

Yet, and this is a big YET—a heavy Yet—a Yet I worry is a white person’s privileged Yet--*I* do hear echoes of liberation in our Gospel passage…actually, not just echoes, but a radical promise of liberation…one that, so very frustratingly actually uses the slavery metaphor to powerful effect….

For me, the Gospel proclaims that should we be ready to receive God…to welcome God home—in ourselves, individually and as a collective body—God will *serve* *us!* We have such immense potential to change the way our world works—and when we are ready to receive God into ourselves and into our communities, God endows us with God’s own participation in bringing about his will—his heart’s desire for us, for *all* of us. We have been ready before, and we have seen the powerful love of something larger than ourselves. We have seen it as a nation, as a town, and for many of us, even in our individual lives. But in the intensity of the conflict and suffering that has been made poignantly more clear to many of us who were able to be unaware a decade ago, I am not sure most of us, including myself, are ready now.

There are numerous things we need to engage in to become ready to embody God—to act on God’s deepest desires for us. But the culminating thing is to center our hearts—our energy and longing and fantastic capacity to love—in God—to love what God loves….to love God’s deepest desires for us….

and not just in the *emotion* of love, but in the *actions* of love—for divine love is an *active* love.

But, how? Well, Jesus gives us a good option in our Gospel passage this morning.

*Where your treasure is, there your heart will be also.*

One commentator pointed out that we often interpret this as meaning that the things we love are the things we will invest in, money or time. And I quote, *“Often vs. 34 is read and preached to mean this: where your heart is, there your treasure will be. We believe intuitively, that if I love something, I am going to put my time and money into it. To a certain extent, this is true. I am sure you can think of worthy things in your life that you love and you put your money toward.”* End quote.

However, that isn’t always the case….There are many people and causes I love deeply and am too distracted, or in some cases, too fearful to really let my heart lead me into full active love for. This interpretation not only implies that we are already really good at investing the necessary resources into the things God loves within and through us, but also suggests that where that isn’t the case, we actually have to somehow change our hearts in order to develop the individual and collective will to do it. It suggests that our focus should be on changing our hearts, and the needed treasure will follow.

But that isn’t what the text says. The text actually says the opposite: *the things we invest in will become the things we love*. It is far more practical advice--Changing our hearts need not be done by sheer force of will, but rather by changing where we invest our money and time. For someone with a worried heart—

someone whose heart so often shies away from taking risks and bold stances—whose very constitution seems intolerable of conflict and can always see nearly every side of an issue to the point sometimes of immbolization—it is really encouraging to hear Jesus tell me that if I shift my treasure to those things my heart has been too fearful participate in, my heart will actually be activated by the power of God’s own will. In many cases, shifting my treasure will mean shifting where my money is invested—there is a lot of plain unnecessary consumerism in my life. Much more often than I like to admit, my monetary treasure is literally invested in making my life just a smidge easier or more efficient, or in how I look. There is much room to shift that treasure to things I love emotionally, yet haven’t had the heart to love actively.

In other cases, it may mean shifting where my time is invested. To my often fearful heart, this passage promises that investing my time even in learning about, reading about, something God is calling me to care about will begin the process of empowering my will to be God’s. And given the amount of time I spend on social media, there is much of my time available to be re-invested.

And, I need not do this alone…none of us need to. We have one another. Not sure where to learn about things you care about? Invite one another to research with together. We are all members, but one body.

So, the liberating question Jesus asks us, in this demoralizing week of yet more mass gun violence, in the confusing, complicated morass of a global immigration crisis and the continued oppression of people of color is….where is ourtreasure? Where is our collective treasure?

Where, as a collective people, either locally in Bedford or in the State of Masschusetts, or in the Nation, is our money invested? Is our time invested?

And where is your own treasure?

*Do not be afraid, little flock, for it is your Father’s good pleasure to give you the Kingdom.*

Let us make ourselves ready.

AMEN.