

Nov 10, 2024

Pr. Steve

Texts: 1 Kings 17: 8-16; Psalm 34; Mark 12: 38-44.

In the name of God, Abba/Imma, Son and Holy Spirit. Amen.

Faith is never blind. Hatred is blind. Indifference is blind—but Faith—never.

Jesus is sitting opposite the Temple Treasury where people are making their contributions. (That's the way it was done in those days.) And he notices this widow tossing in her last two coins and he's outraged. This is not a story of admiration. He's outraged because of what he just said previously. [Mark 38-40] It's the scribes; it's the religious authorities, the secular rulers who've stolen her home, who stripped her of what she had — because the poor are always vulnerable. [The rich] love to be seen, right? They're sharing their spare change, their excess, their largesse—what they've stolen. It's her money they're putting in there. Jesus—outraged.

The water pump at Laurel Galan burned—the sole source of water for these people. What can they do about it? Well, they've got no credit. None of them have bank accounts. They can't go to a bank, so they do with the poor around the world always do. You go to loan sharks, who steal more of your money. Outrageous interest! And Jesus is outraged.

Zubair and his family fought in the [Afghanistan] War, made it to America —"Land of the free, Home of the brave". And their rent was [just] increased by another thousand dollars— a month.

Jesus is outraged.

The high school kids in Luvhaivhai, Lwamondo Parish, have no running water in their high school—nothing to drink, no toilets, nothing to cook with. Can you imagine that at Monte Vista or San Ramon High?

Jesus is outraged.

Can we fix it? Can we fix all of it? No, we can't. We can't. [It's] delusional on our part to attempt to fix all of it. No. So what are we going to do, then?

[There are] two ways of seeing the world.

One is to see the world as "it"— things, stuff, possessions, commodities. Get your best cut. Get your best deal. You know how that works. It's said we no longer talk to each other—we just cut deals—with what? The modern world—"so advanced"

The other way is 'stewarding'—to see the world through the lens of faith. Faith begins by making us aware of ourselves—and our incompleteness—and that we're part of a bigger context. And then we become aware of other people, and those relations, which can inspire us, and drive us crazy.

"Other people—you know what I'm talking about, don't you? Other people. Oh yeah. It's not nice to admit it in church, I know that, but I'm talking about 'other people'".

Which then presses us to begin to understand at another level. How do we end up together like this? And understanding leads to Wisdom—and Wisdom always leads to God, who makes clear—'*Life is a Gift*'.

This breath, this moment, this day—you and I have done nothing to receive it—and here we are. We get to be here. Stewarding is the response of gratitude for God's infinite generosity. That's why we will go on praising God, no matter what happens, [even] after a week like this, *because that praise is central to our staying alive, and that gratitude, filling us with deeper vision.*

Our indigenous brothers and sisters designed their society, their culture, for centuries around what is called '*The Gift Economy*'. They, too, begin with gratitude for all that is—and that leads to reciprocity. When we take something, when we need something, what happens to restore some sense of balance? And that leads to respect for a sense of the whole, which leads to our responsibility to care that we are in this together.

Gifts create ongoing relationships. That's the key. That's the key—that gifts are not my 'cut'. Gifts create ongoing relationship, so that the value of what is shared increases the more it is shared—because we see that we need each other, and we need to be sharing what we have. That's life. That's Life.

In our consumption-driven, insatiably greedy, earth-destroying market economy, we are told, “*We have the highest quality of life, ever. Ever!*” Why are we so empty? Why? “Belongings will satisfy your hungers—you need more: Shop more. Buy more. Belongings will satisfy what you're hungry for.”

And the truth is, Belonging is what we are craving. There's lots of full bellies, not all. Yeah there's lots of full bellies, but spirits that are empty, and hungry, and starving. It is Ceremony, and Ritual, and Liturgy that remind us to ‘*remember to remember*’—because we keep forgetting. And we have to gather in order to remember to remember that life is Sacred, and Hope depends upon the moving, and the sharing, and the flowing of all the gifts of life to enable all of us to live.

When we taste the Eucharist, we are tasting communion with all life. We are tasting that covenant of responsibility. It's not enough—it's not enough to merely change policy. *What is desperately needed for our times is to change our hearts.*

Imagine. Imagine a world where widows can live freely, and our children can be raised in a culture of gratitude. Imagine it—for God's sake and ours. Amen.

The peace, which surpasses all human understanding, keep your hearts and your minds in Christ Jesus.