

Eleventh Sunday After Pentecost (C/RCL)
Luke 12.32-40
August 12, 2007
Holy Trinity, Manasquan

Many of us have just read the seventh volume of the Harry Potter series, *Harry Potter and the Deathly Hallows*. For those of you who plan to read it, but haven't gotten around to it, don't worry! I'm not going to give away the ending! I'm just going to point out that J.K. Rowling includes a quote from today's Gospel. On page 325 (for those who want to look it up ☺) she tells us that the inscription on the granite gravestone of Dumbledore's mother and sister is this:

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

She doesn't give Jesus any credit for having said it or St. Luke any credit for having written it down, but once again we're reminded of the importance of Bible literacy! Those who know the Bible find it in surprising places ☺.

What reason do you think somebody would have for putting that verse on a headstone?

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

To me it says that the person buried there was near and dear to someone. It's also a clue that we should "treasure" our loved ones while they're still alive! The way we do that is by making them a priority in our lives.

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

If someone, something is important to us, we dwell on them, we invest time and thought and care, we rearrange our lives to put them in the middle. We guard them. We grieve them when they're gone.

At times, from the outside looking in, we value some strange things. "One man's trash is another man's treasure." I was on the New York subway one day with a bagwoman who guarded her upright, two-wheeled shopping cart as if it held crown jewels from the Tower of

London. She looked a little suspiciously at the rest of us who shared the train car with her, and hovered protectively over her cart. Looking out of a corner of my eye so I didn't appear to be staring, I saw her remove the contents a piece at a time. It turned out her prized possession was a collection of used MacDonald's wrappers, which she opened up reverently and tenderly refolded in her lap, one by one, ketchup, mustard, pickle juice and all. We know that's literally crazy. That poor woman's mental illness was probably the reason for her homelessness.

Thankfully my dad's not mentally ill, but my mom sure thinks **he's** crazy because of what he saves. Empty glass baby food jars, cocktail onion jars, mayonnaise jars become receptacles for nails, screws, nuts and bolts of all sizes. Telephone wire has endless uses, including hanging pictures, fixing the tailpipe of the car and enhancing grandchildren's science fair projects. My mom believes my dad's work room is full of trash. To him it's all treasure. She tries to smuggle things out in black heavy-duty garbage bags. He knows this, and so he sometimes spotchecks the outgoing garbage ☺.

I can't poke fun at my dad without admitting that **I** have his packrat gene, the need to squirrel things away. I must. I didn't grow up during the Great Depression like he did, so I've never lacked the essentials. But Mark can tell you, some of what **I** prize is more trash than treasure, too.

We just want to be sure that what we treasure is **worth** treasuring, because:

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

What we **truly treasure** consumes our time, our energy, our attention, our love, our very self. What we prize the most is what we will work hardest to guard, to protect. What do **you** treasure? Really?? Who or what gets the biggest chunk of your time? What's important enough that you get preoccupied about it? What or who would you miss the most if you lost it?

This is a good week to take your Celebrate insert home and do a cut-and-paste. Cut out that line in the Gospel,

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

Then tuck or tape it someplace helpful. Maybe you're aware you've been less-than-generous with anybody but yourself or your immediate family when it comes to money. Maybe you identified with the rich fool in last week's parable who built more and more silos to house his grain, instead of sharing his bounty with the hungry. In that case, tape the little verse to the inside of your checkbook cover. Maybe your spouse or kids have been complaining about how little they see of you, how little they **get** of you because your work is so all-consuming. Then slip the reminder,

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

under the glass blotter of your desk at work or type it into your palm pilot to help you save time and energy to be with the family for whom you work so hard. Maybe you'll want to glue the verse to the back of your child or spouse's photo in your wallet to remember to treasure and prioritize the ones who are most important to you.

If you're a student or teacher, tape the tiny verse to the top of your schedule or syllabus. If you're an athlete or coach, how about the game schedule? It's a way to ask if the biggest agenda in your life is getting an A, making tenure, receiving a promotion, winning the championship, or storing up "an unfailing treasure in heaven, where no thief come near and no moth destroys" (Luke 12.33). Report cards will yellow, trophies will rust, and tenure is not ticket to heaven.

We are baptizing two babies this weekend at Holy Trinity, Ethan Michael and Megan Elisabeth. Their parents, their families, treasure them, as they treasure their other children, too. I'm sure there's nothing these parents wouldn't do for their children, including laying down their lives. There's nothing our Father in heaven would n't do for these children, including sending His Son, "so that everyone who believes in Him may not perish, but may have eternal life" (John 3.16). Jesus lay down His life for us. He, His Father in heaven, their Holy Spirit, is our greatest

treasure. What the Trinity requires of us is our first priority. The Gospel call to love and service **demands** and **deserves** our full attention, our most fervent efforts, our wholehearted investment of self.

Cherishing God's children is always the way to go. But what about the rest of what we value? In God's eyes, is what **we** cherish true treasure? Or is it trash? Are we hoarding old hamburger wrappers or guarding what is really precious? It's important to know! Because

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

Pastor Mary Virginia Farnham