

Ash Wednesday
St. Matthew 6:16-21
March 6th, 2019
Sts. Peter & Paul Evangelical Lutheran Church, UAC
Simpsonville, SC
Pastor Jerald Dulas

Where Your Treasure Is

In Nomine Iesu!

In the Name of the Father and of the + Son and of the Holy Ghost. Amen.

Prayer in Pulpit before Sermon:

O Lord, send out Thy Light and Thy Truth, let them lead us. O Lord, open Thou my lips, that my mouth may show forth Thy praise. O Lord, graciously preserve me, lest that by any means, when I have preached to others, I myself should be rejected. Amen.

Grace, mercy, and peace be to you from God our Father and from our Lord and Savior + Jesus Christ. Amen.

We have entered the season of Lent. The next few weeks we will spend ample time examining ourselves in accordance with the Ten Commandments. What we will find is that we have not kept them in least. Lent is all about reflecting upon our sin as we prepare for the day of our Lord's crucifixion and death. But this is not an outward reflection, but an inward reflection of our own hearts. We do not do this to garner favor with anyone, not even the Lord. We do not do this so that we can compare ourselves to others, and in turn consider ourselves more worthy than others, because "at least we are not as bad as that person." No, our reflection is inward, for our heavenly Father Who sees in secret will reward us with forgiveness in secret.

This is really our Lord's point, when He says, "*Do not lay up for yourselves treasures on Earth.*" The treasures of the life are fleeting. There are many ways in which the things which we treasure on this earth pass away. Our Lord + Jesus in His Sermon the Mount, and recorded for us by the Apostle and Evangelist St. Matthew, lists three ways in which earthly things are taken from us. Moths, rust, and thieves destroy and take away our earthly treasures. Our possessions in this life are poorly guarded. Moths can chew up our clothes. Rust can destroy our cars and anything that is metal. And, the word translated "rust" in our English Bibles literally means "the process of eating." So, this word could also refer to food, which either goes bad because of age, or it is consumed by us through our eating it. When we eat food, we no longer have possession of it. It is gone.

Our possessions can even be taken from us through theft. Certainly thieves can break in and steal our possessions. But our possessions, our money, is also lost through being overcharged for things, or receiving poor service, or inferior merchandise which breaks easily. Our possessions are always at risk of being destroyed, consumed, or taken from us. This is why we should not place our trust in them as many people in our society and world do.

Also fleeting is the praise of mankind. When we do good works to curry favor with our fellowman, we may receive the reward we are looking for. Mankind loves to praise those who do good things, at they will praise you for the things that they consider good. This is why there are so many people who are praised by our society who do all sorts of things contrary to Ten Commandments. The world has its own moral code. And it does not line up with what our Lord God considers good and upright. This is why we should avoid seeking the favor of this world. For, if we desire to be loved by the world, and be

like the world, why would the world ever want to change her ways. By our acquiescence to the world, we give up the treasures of Heaven. This world as we know will pass away. Just as all of our earthly treasures will pass away. Therefore, my dear friends, do not put your trust in the things of this world.

Cling instead to the things of Heaven. Worldly possessions will cease because they are poorly guarded. But the things of Heaven will never pass away for the not even the gates of Hell can take them from you. You possess the treasures of Heaven through faith—faith that is continuously strengthened through our participation in hearing the Word and receiving the Sacraments.

Where your heart is there will be also your treasure. What you cling to and trust in and hope in is your treasure. If we cling to our earthly treasures, we will perish eternally, just as our earthly stuff will be destroyed and taken from us. If we cling to the gifts of Heaven, they will never be taken from us, or destroyed.

This is why the Church observes Lent. It is the time in the Church's year when we do a little spring cleaning of the soul, through contrition and faith. We examine our lives according to the Ten Commandments and then confess our sins to the Pastor, as if he was confessing to God Himself, so that we might receive the absolution of our sins. When we confess that we are sinners in need of God's grace, our Lord + Jesus gives us Himself. He gives us His life and His death for us.

The greatest treasure we can possess is faith in our Lord + Jesus Christ. His work of redemption for us will not be destroyed by moths, or consumed by rust, or stolen by thieves. His atonement for the sins of the whole world will not be taken from us by the devil, the world, or even our own sinful flesh. This is a heavenly treasure that will not pass away. Let your heart cling to this everlasting and eternal treasure. Then you will have an eternal treasure in your eternal home in Heaven.

So then, my dear friends, as we examine ourselves during this Lenten season; as we reflect upon the Ten Commandments and our daily breaking of them, let us come often to this holy house and confess our sins before God and receive the absolution, that is, the forgiveness that He desires to give to all those who penitently confess their sins and admit their unworthiness to receive His gifts. He in turn will give us treasures that do not pass away. He will give us forgiveness, eternal life and salvation.

Therefore, rend your hearts and not your garments. Confess your sin, and cling to the works and merits of the Lord + Jesus Christ, Who perfectly fulfilled the Law which we break daily, and even suffered our punishment, and died on our behalf so that we might be rewarded with the treasures of Heaven that He won for us on the tree of the holy cross. And the God of all mercy will forgive you your sin, and give you the crown of eternal life. Where your heart is, there will be also your treasure. Place your trust in the works and merits of the Christ, Who won for you redemption from all your sins. In the Name of our Lord + Jesus Christ. Amen.

Prayer in Pulpit after Sermon:

Not unto us, O Lord, not unto us, but unto Thy Name give glory! I will extol Thee, O Lord, and I will praise Thy Name forever and ever. Amen.

The Votum:

The peace of God, which passeth all understanding, keep your hearts and minds through Christ Jesus. Amen.

Soli Deo Gloria!