

✠ Luke 12:13-21 ✠

IN NOMINE IESU

St. Paul minces no words. Covetousness is idolatry (Colossians 3:5). If you covet, you are worshiping other gods. If you lust for what you do not have, if your heart's desire is to keep what you do have, or if you desire to be rid of what God has given you, then you covet and the wrath of God will be revealed against you.

Toil and work, slave and save, it is useless. Today your soul is demanded of you. Today you will stand naked before the judgment seat of God and answer for your deeds (Romans 2:6). What good will your wealth do you now? What good will your tithes and offerings, your time and talents, your plans and schemes do you now? Of what good is anything that you call your own? It is good for nothing.

Adam cannot claim innocence and Eve cannot unbite the forbidden fruit. Man covets what is not his. Man desires to keep what he cannot keep. Man desires to be rid of what God has given Him. Repent.

You have been raised with Christ in the holy waters of Baptism. Therefore seek the things above, where Christ is. Set your minds on things that are above, not on earthly things (Colossians 3:1-2). Do not consider the turn of the plow or what your hand has done, for they are nothing, like grass to flames. They profit you nothing. They are fleeting and will be given to another. Only a fool says that he owns and tries to keep what God takes away.

Consider those who dwelt in the land of Canaan when Joshua son of Nun conquered them. Did they not toil and labor for their great vineyards that Joshua took by force? Did they not slave under the sun for their crops and cattle? Did they not sweat and bleed trying to tame a wild land? Yet God took from the sinner what they had gathered, and gave to His people what they did not work for.

God did not ask the Canaanites if it was okay with them if His people came and took their lands. As a matter of fact, given the bloody contents of the Old Testament, it is safe to assume that it was not okay with the Canaanites, Hivites, Perisites, or Philistines that the nomadic people called Israel took their lands. Yet God does what He pleases; He takes from the one who thinks he has, and gives to the one who thinks he has not.

Do you not know that if you behave as one belonging to the world then you will *be* as one belonging to the world? Put to death therefore what is earthly in you: sexual immorality, impurity, lust, evil desire, and covetousness (Colossians 3:5). Do not lie to your neighbor. Do not be angry for anger begets hatred and hatred is the crown of the evil one. Do not slander or lie, for such works are the works of the father of lies and those who do them are his children.

And what of your wisdom and knowledge? Do you think yourself so smart and knowledgeable that you are free from condemnation and accusation? Are you the one who has common sense as your bedfellow and wisdom as your doorkeeper? Is it you alone who knows the greater workings of all things? Are you the one from whom everyone should seek knowledge and understanding? Do you put yourself in the seat of the judge, deciding who is right and who is wrong based on your own covetous desires? Repent.

For such is the man who cried out to our Lord, “Teacher, tell my brother to divide the inheritance with me.” Such wisdom is foolishness and such desire is idolatry. And Jesus will have no part in idolatry for He came to do His Father’s will. He came to seek and save the lost, not to give judgments over the frivolous and foolhardy. “Take care, be on your guard against all covetousness, for one’s life does not consist in the abundance of his possessions” (Luke 12:15).

“But preacher, am I not supposed to work and toil for the necessities of life?” By all means! Be a good father or mother, a good son or daughter, a good husband or wife. Be a good worker and a faithful neighbor. For such things are pleasing to the Lord. But do not be a father who neglects his children. Do not be a child who angers his parents. Do not be a wife who dishonors her husband. Do not be a worker who desires the riches of his employer. Do not be a neighbor who covets his neighbor’s house. Rather rejoice that God has blessed you in so many abundant ways, for you created nothing you have, but God has given it to you out of the abundance of his grace and mercy. Know this, and then you will care for the needy and watch over the widows and orphans. Greed divides but as it is written, “love binds all things together in perfect harmony” (Colossians 3:14).

But more often than not, we desire the inheritance that will be destroyed and eaten by moths. We desire the things of this world. We toil and slave to build our inheritance here. And we hide behind the idea that we have to care for our own and that we have to provide for our families. We say, “We’re not greedy, just frugal. We’re not greedy, just prudent.” But in defending our selfish actions we buy and own the lie that greed has only to do with material possessions and wealth. But greed of the flesh is of little significance next to greed of the heart. As our Lord says, “What comes out of a person is what defiles him. For from within, out of the heart of man, come evil thoughts” (Mark 7:20-21).

The truth is, we lust after control. If we truly wanted to care for our families we would concentrate more on the things that truly matter, teaching our children the Small Catechism and working to bring them to the Lord’s Table. But we think the real world is Monday through Saturday, and Sunday is the sweet toping on an otherwise fulfilling life.

We want things to go our way. In our heart of hearts we care mainly that we are not embarrassed or compromised, shamed, or worse, dependant on someone else. For what is dependence but the tell tale sign of being weak and unable to do it on our own. We think ourselves our most important commodity. We believe lies and chase the wind so that we can build a fortress around ourselves that we think looks good and will stand strong. But we are fools. Repent.

For our lives are not measured by our possessions. They are not measured by our ideas and desires. Our lives are not measured by anything of us. They are measured by Christ. And though we sin and covet, God loves us. He cares more for us than we do ourselves. This is evident in that He continues day after day, week after week, month after month, year after year, to forgive our sins and call us His children. We do not deserve this. We do not earn this.

We do not deserve to partake of the Lord’s Supper. We do not and cannot earn the holy absolution pronounced over us. We do not deserve to hear God’s Word. It is mercy that allows us to be in the presence of God. We waste our lives chasing the wind while God makes our lives matter by filling us with His Holy Spirit.

Apart from God life is meaningless. There is nothing worth fighting for. There is nothing worth working for. There is nothing worth anything. In our sin we are not rich toward God. We are poor beggars. We do not have the capacity to earn salvation or store up for ourselves eternal life. The inheritance of this mortal life is dust and ashes, caskets and graves. We cannot make the good inheritance ours.

But God can and does. God gives you the inheritance that you do not deserve and that will never perish. As it is written, “He saved us, not because of works done by us in righteousness, but according to His own mercy, by the washing of regeneration and renewal by the Holy Spirit, whom He poured out on us richly through Jesus Christ our Savior, so that being justified by His grace we might become heirs according to the hope of eternal life” (Titus 3:5-7).

It is God, not you, who stores up for you the treasures of heaven. For it was God who became like us, sharing in our life, so that we would share in His. Out of the heart of God flows all good things: mercy, love, forgiveness of sins, salvation, and eternal life. You do not need to search for the treasures of heaven, you do not need to toil or work for them. Our heavenly Father has given to you the Treasure of heaven, even Christ Jesus, our Lord.

It is He who works and slaves for the inheritance. It was He who chose to be born of a woman, to be subject to temptation and weakness. It was He who submitted Himself wholly to the will of the Father, dying on the cross, giving His body into death and shedding His blood for you. It was Jesus who earned the inheritance of heaven. And He shares it with you.

He invites you to come to the healing waters of Baptism, washing your sin-ridden heart, making it clean and pure. He invites you to come and hear His Word of life and forgiveness, giving to you ears to hear and understand. It is He who invites you to His Table, where He gives to you His eternal flesh and living blood so that your flesh will see His face and your life will be in His.

God, your God, has stored up for you the treasure of heaven, come and see that the Lord is good.

In the name of the FATHER and of the ✠ SON and of the HOLY SPIRIT.
✠ AMEN ✠