

Sunday 26th September 2004, Seventeenth Sunday after Pentecost Rob Lamerton

Readings:

- Jeremiah 32: 1-3a, 6-15
- Psalm 91:1-6, 14-16
- 1Timothy 6:6-19
- Luke 16:19-31

These sermon notes were used in part at the 10am service which was the baptism of Sam and Nicholas Wade.

The parables of Jesus seem to me to have

- A context in which they were originally told by Jesus;
- A context in which they were re-told by the early Church 20, 30 or 40 years on, ...and....
- The context in which we tell them today, and in the various times of history.

In our story today --- it appears Jesus directed the story at "Pharisees who loved money".

The story itself is not original to Jesus, but appears to have been a familiar one of the day relating to the reversal of fortunes in the next world --- there is a twist in the telling, especially in the conversations between the rich man "Dives" and Abraham --- pointing out that those who are unmoved by the teaching of the Law of Moses and the prophets would also be unmoved by a miracle --- even if it was someone being raised from the dead!

We ought to be careful about letting the details of the life to come --- whether in Hades or Abraham's bosom --- take over...

The important issue is the REVERSAL in the Kingdom of God.

**Woe to you who are rich
Blessed are you who are poor.**

Noting the context in all the stories about money, and since the first part of the parable is conventional wisdom, it would be wrong to build our teaching on the next life from this story.

I think in the context of the early Christians 30-40 years on, the conventional message could also have been emphasized, reversal....

BUT the reference about someone raised from the dead would have taken on a new meaning as they continued to be aware of the presence of the risen Christ among them.

In our day, it may be a salutary reminder of that same reversal --- be aware of the poor person at your gate --- don't become so self oriented, so obsessed with raising money, that you miss other more important things! One of the great difficulties as a church is having beautiful buildings which are becoming (from the point of view of maintenance and insurance), a very costly enterprise. (25% - 27% of the plate offering?)

But we **MUST** be good stewards of our property, or it becomes degraded and does not serve our purpose --- which is to serve God.

Is that the message in the parable for today? I don't know! But at least we are challenged to think about how we use our resources.

Do they blind us to the needs of others because we are so caught up in them, or can we use them effectively in God's service for the world around. The parable reminds us to be aware of the reversals of God's kingdom!

Moses and the prophets spoke of the need to consider the poor. If we ignore them, we will also surely miss the message of the one raised from the dead.

In an odd twist, Jeremiah some 600 years before Jesus, was challenged to put his money into property in spite of a desperate property market --- the city was surrounded by the Babylonians! His investment was meant to be an act of faith, of TRUST, that God would bring them through the toughest of times. Sometimes we need to invest our resources and hope God for the future --- in God's service to create a future.

The passage in 1 Timothy 6 has been interpreted as an ordination address from Paul to Timothy. The one to be ordained, is reminded of the confession of faith made at baptism.

- be content
- we began with nothing
- therefore everything is gain (it's all PROFIT!)
- so lets not be trapped by it!
- by the **love of money**

INTSTEAD --- wealth is to be in a different form

- thankfulness
- trust in God
- generosity and good works

the investment is to be with God, that we may grab hold of **life itself**.