

SIXTEENTH SUNDAY AFTER PENTECOST -- PROPER 21

September 29, 2019

Year C, Revised Common Lectionary

**Jeremiah 32:1-3a, 6-15** The word that came to Jeremiah from the LORD in the tenth year of King Zedekiah of Judah, which was the eighteenth year of Nebuchadrezzar. At that time the army of the king of Babylon was besieging Jerusalem, and the prophet Jeremiah was confined in the court of the guard that was in the palace of the king of Judah, where King Zedekiah of Judah had confined him. Jeremiah said, The word of the LORD came to me: Hanamel son of your uncle Shallum is going to come to you and say, "Buy my field that is at Anathoth, for the right of redemption by purchase is yours." Then my cousin Hanamel came to me in the court of the guard, in accordance with the word of the LORD, and said to me, "Buy my field that is at Anathoth in the land of Benjamin, for the right of possession and redemption is yours; buy it for yourself." Then I knew that this was the word of the LORD. And I bought the field at Anathoth from my cousin Hanamel, and weighed out the money to him, seventeen shekels of silver. I signed the deed, sealed it, got witnesses, and weighed the money on scales. Then I took the sealed deed of purchase, containing the terms and conditions, and the open copy; and I gave the deed of purchase to Baruch son of Neriah son of Mahseiah, in the presence of my cousin Hanamel, in the presence of the witnesses who signed the deed of purchase, and in the presence of all the Judeans who were sitting in the court of the guard. In their presence I charged Baruch, saying, Thus says the LORD of hosts, the God of Israel: Take these deeds, both this sealed deed of purchase and this open deed, and put them in an earthenware jar, in order that they may last for a long time. For thus says the LORD of hosts, the God of Israel: Houses and fields and vineyards shall again be bought in this land.



PARABLE OF DIVES AND LAZARUS, Jacob Locher, Penn Provenance Project, ca. 1530

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**Psalm 91:1-6, 14-16**

You who live in the shelter of the Most High, who abide in the shadow of the Almighty, will say to the LORD, "My refuge and my fortress; my God, in whom I trust."

For he will deliver you from the snare of the fowler and from the deadly pestilence; he will cover you with his pinions, and under his wings you will find refuge; his faithfulness is a shield and buckler.

You will not fear the terror of the night, or the arrow that flies by day, or the pestilence that stalks in darkness, or the destruction that wastes at noonday.

Those who love me, I will deliver;

I will protect those who know my name.

When they call to me, I will answer them;

I will be with them in trouble,

I will rescue them and honor them.

With long life I will satisfy them,

and show them my salvation.

**1 Timothy 6:6-19** Of course, there is great gain in godliness combined with contentment; for we brought nothing into the world, so that we can take nothing out of it; but if we have food and clothing, we will be content with these. But those who want to be rich fall into temptation and are trapped by many senseless and harmful desires that plunge people into ruin and destruction. For the love of money is a root of all kinds of evil, and in their eagerness to be rich some have wandered away from the faith and pierced themselves with many pains. But as for you, man of God, shun all this; pursue righteousness, godliness, faith, love, endurance, gentleness. Fight the good fight of the faith; take hold of the eternal life, to which you were called and for which you made the good confession in the presence of many witnesses. In the presence of God, who gives life to all things, and of Christ Jesus, who in his testimony before Pontius Pilate made the good confession, I charge you to keep the commandment without spot or blame until the manifestation of our Lord Jesus Christ, which he will bring about at the right time--he who is the blessed and only Sovereign, the King of kings and Lord of lords. It is he alone who has immortality and dwells in unapproachable light, whom no one has ever seen or can see; to him be honor and eternal dominion. Amen. As for those who in the present age are rich, command them not to be haughty, or to set their hopes on the uncertainty of riches, but rather on God who richly provides us with everything for our enjoyment. They are to do good, to be rich in good works, generous, and ready to share, thus storing up for themselves the treasure of a good foundation for the future, so that they may take hold of the life that really is life.

**Luke 16:19-31** "There was a rich man who was dressed in purple and fine linen and who feasted sumptuously every day. And at his gate lay a poor man named Lazarus, covered with sores, who longed to satisfy his hunger with what fell from the rich man's table; even the dogs would come and lick his sores. The poor man died and was carried away by the angels to be with Abraham. The rich man also died and was buried. In Hades, where he was being tormented, he looked up and saw Abraham far away with Lazarus by his side. He called out, 'Father Abraham, have mercy on me, and send Lazarus to dip the tip of his finger in water and cool my tongue; for I am in agony in these flames.' But Abraham said, 'Child, remember that during your lifetime you received your good things, and Lazarus in like manner evil things; but now he is comforted here, and you are in agony. Besides all this, between you and us a great chasm has been fixed, so that those who might want to pass from here to you cannot do so, and no one can cross from there to us.' He said, 'Then, father, I beg you to send him to my father's house-- for I have five brothers--that he may warn them, so that they will not also come into this place of torment.' Abraham replied, 'They have Moses and the prophets; they should listen to them.' He said, 'No, father Abraham; but if someone goes to them from the dead, they will repent.' He said to him, 'If they do not listen to Moses and the prophets, neither will they be convinced even if someone rises from the dead.'"

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## Reflection & Questions

Hope is a common theme in today's texts. They remind us to live in God's ways, even when life is pulling us away from God.

The prophet Jeremiah speaks to the Israelites who have been held captive in Babylon. Though they are in a foreign land, living under a different ruler, in a different culture, and trying to hold onto their religion, Jeremiah proclaims that, even in this situation, there is hope. The ability to purchase land and settle down, even in a foreign land, is a sign of hope of God's providence.

The psalmist uses the image of God as refuge and fortress—someone to turn to when the world around us is swirling in darkness and distress. We cling to God's love because we are God's people.

First Timothy reminds us that we are called to follow Christ and not allow worldly things to overwhelm us or to guide our lives. Our true guide is Christ, the "King of kings and Lord of lords."

And the Gospel of Luke points to the way of a godly life. We are to follow God's ways and build a strong relationship with God through Jesus Christ, each and every day of our lives.

### *As you reflect on these scriptures this week:*

1. Jeremiah is able to take a very long view. When have you been able to act with a long, future view in mind? When has our congregation done this?
2. 1 Timothy talks about being content. Are you content? What makes for contentment or not?
3. The verses from 1 Timothy contain several sayings that have become commonplaces. "We brought nothing into the world, so we can take nothing out of it." And, "The love of money is the root of all kinds of evil." Where have you heard these expressions outside of church? How do they shape your view of money and possessions?
4. Neither the Luke text nor the passage from 1 Timothy condemn money, but they do contain pointed admonishments about wealth. How do we recognize when we are being good stewards or when we are justifying our wealth?
5. In Jeremiah the phrase "in the presence of" is repeated. Why is having witness to this purchase so important?
6. In Luke, Lazarus was lying "at the gate." Try to notice those "at the gate" this week. Who do you see? Where are they? What are they longing for? Who is Lazarus in our context? The person or people we ignore or dismiss?
7. Who is the rich man in our context? What are we to say to the "rich man"?
8. Have you ever been in what felt like a desperate situation? Did you maintain hope? If so, how? How did the circumstance change?