

Where our Treasure Lies

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Last week we talked about embracing disillusionment as part of our faith practice, and we considered the dangers of putting our faith in the wrong thing.

Today our readings continue the conversation about faith, and about what matters. Today Jesus' reminds us that "where your treasure is, there your heart is also."

And this is a really helpful insights. It indicates how prepared we are to meet meets at the place where our hearts lie. Because Jesus promises that God will seek us out in that place. God has the coordinates of our hearts, no matter where we put them or even try to hide them.

And if we have a difficult time finding our hearts ourselves, the advice is good – what do you treasure? What do you treasure really?

How can we tell what we truly treasure in our hearts? One way to answer this question is to examine where we put our time. Because often our time goes to what we treasure most.

So if God were to show up like a thief in the night, what would the Divine Presence likely find us doing:

Well God would likely find us sleeping, according to the Bureau of Labor Statistics – as that's at the top of the list for the activity that most of us do for the longest time each day. Since God neither slumbers nor sleeps, so the chance of God catching us unconscious are good. God will have to knock loudly.

Catch us on a weekday and God would likely find us at work, or at school, or exercising, watching TV, at a meal. Finding us engaged in a spiritual practice is way down at the bottom of list, according to the National Labor Relations Board. It's likely to go up on the weekend, though, if that's any consolation. And this is a national average, to be sure, so likely these stats aren't describing us, right?

But none of this is to say that what we spend our time doing at any time of the day is automatically closed to God. A better measure of assessing where our treasure and our heart lies is in whether we might say "Not now, Jesus, I'm busy" if the Lord just happens to show up during one of those activities. Or we might find ourselves feeling pretty uncomfortable, perhaps trying to hide what we're doing if Jesus decided to hang out with us.

You get the idea.

Wherever your treasure is there your heart lies. And perhaps the hidden challenge of that truism, is that we might suspect that God might not be interested in us or our treasure unless we cleaned them up to high polish, made them perfect somehow or particularly elevated and refined.

But the bottom line, our Scriptures tell us today, is that God wants all of us – all of who we are, all of what we treasure. And God's time is now – not part of the day or a slice of the weekend. That doesn't mean that we replace sleep with "spiritual activities", but consider what it means to live a life where everything we do and are invites us to discover the presence of the Loving God already comfortably at home there.

Because if we did, then I think even the most ordinary or quotidian part of our lives would start to look like a prayer.

In her little book "The Quotidian Mysteries: Laundry, Liturgy and 'Women's Work'", Kathleen Norris writes about contemplating the presence of God in the tiniest, most ordinary actions of our everyday lives. The three activities she personally finds most open her to the presence of God are walking, baking bread and doing laundry. These are place, I think she would say, where her own treasure lies.

"Each day brings with it not only the necessity of eating but the renewal of our love of and in God," she writes. "This may sound like a simple thing, but it is not easy to maintain faith, hope or love in the everyday. I wonder if this is because human pride, and particularly a preoccupation with intellectual, artistic or spiritual matters, can provide a convenient way to ignore our ordinary, daily, bodily needs."¹

But God is particularly interested in those needs, she writes, perhaps more than we are sometimes.

Today's passage from the Gospel of Luke has some urgency to it, a call to be ready at any time for Jesus to return and start making demands. I'm not sure that that helps me in these frenetic times, where it seems like our doomsday clock is ticking, ticking and I feel that I'm doing nearly enough to address to address profound injustices. It's already hard enough to get to sleep at night, without worrying that Jesus is going to pound on my door at 2 a.m.

But I don't need to read the Scriptures this way. I can as Kathleen Norris suggests allow my whole life to be a practice of the presence of God. I can ask myself, what must I do to let my treasure and my heart and my God all come together in a way that is deeply nourished by the love of God and releases that love into the world to enrich others?

Here today's passage from the Letter to the Hebrews is also profoundly helpful. Because it reminds us that the imaginative work of faith – that very human practice that we discussed last Sunday – is part of seeing the invisible God in all the tangible ways that we live.

"Now faith is the assurance of things hoped for, the conviction of things not seen," the author of Hebrews attests. The **assurance** of things we hope for, the **conviction** of things not seen?

I like to think of faith being a matter of walking toward something as though it's there.

What if we walked toward our very lives in this way? Walked toward our tasks, our duties, our delights, our treasured activities and our mundane ones as though God were already in them, as though God's promise to make something everlasting of our little lives were already happening? What if we walked toward our lives as if we were ok – not damaged goods, or mismatched furniture – but the place where God dwells? What if we were assured and convicted that we were beloved of God?

I guess this is to say that faith in God requires faith in ourselves – that we are worthy to be home for God, that our own lives may be filled with as much mystery as the life of God is.

¹ Quotidian Mysteries, The: Laundry, Liturgy and "Women's Work": 1998 (Madeleva Lecture in Spirituality) (p.10- 11). Paulist Press. Kindle Edition.

We live in a time where our anxieties are high, our hopes for repair and redemption are profound and the future is invisible and very uncertain. Our Scriptures are filled with times just as these, with God shaping God's world through people too small or too weak to change things on their own. And so Abraham and Sarah remain the exemplars of God's promises – that an entire nation that would be conceived by a woman and man long past their child-bearing years.

Their faith that God could do this through their quotidian lives, was also their yes to the promise of God, and their willingness to make their lives a launching pad for God's own dream for the world.

And so their lives became a place where treasure and heart and God all came together. And that is the place where God ever makes God's promises happen. As in them, so in us as people of faith.

For "By faith we understand that the worlds were prepared by the word of God, so that what is seen was made from things that are not visible, " the author Hebrews writes.

And to that I can only say, Amen.

See this Chicago Tribune article -- <https://www.chicagotribune.com/featured/sns-ws-how-americans-spend-their-time-20220113-auwiglwefefdhmbImzykwmdle-photogallery.html> Or these Bureau of Labor stats for 2021 -- <https://www.bls.gov/news.release/atus.t01.htm> Or this summary from the LBS - <https://www.bls.gov/news.release/atus.nr0.htm>