

Fifth Sunday of Creation Care
September 27, 2026 • 10:30am
Trinity Episcopal Church • New Orleans, LA

The Rev. Lex Breckinridge

May the words of my mouth and the meditation of our hearts be always acceptable in your sight, O Lord, our strength and our Redeemer.

Why are you at Trinity this morning? Certainly there are as many reasons as there are folks gathered here, but I'm going to go out on a limb and suggest a few of those reasons that I'll bet we all share. One is that your soul needs to be nourished and fed.

I've long believed that we are not human beings on a spiritual journey. We are spiritual beings on a human journey. Saint Augustine famously observed, you have made us for yourself, O Lord, and our hearts are restless until they rest in you.

Our heart's true home is the heart of God. And one place we can surely locate the heart of God is right here in this space. Look around you.

Just take a look. The beauty of the stained glass, the wood carvings, the vastness of this space. You close your eyes and allow your mind to wander.

You can feel the presence of generations who've come before you to find nourishment of the soul. You see their hands clasped in prayer. You can hear their whispered words of thanks and praise.

They are here just as surely as you are. Another reason we're all here is that we need bread for the journey. Sunday is only one day out of seven this week.

Monday's going to roll around sooner than you think. It's back to work or back to school or back to managing the household. How are you going to put your faith to

work this week? Do you have a purpose larger than your own small self this week? There's a world of hurt out there.

Are you doing even a little bit to help? When conflicts arise, when life gets messy, when we disappoint ourselves or disappoint others, what kind of inner resources do we have to cope? As the Eucharistic prayer you'll hear in a few minutes says, deliver us from the presumption of coming to the table for solace only and not for strength, for pardon only and not for renewal. The bread we need is right here and we come for community. We come for friendship.

We come for encouragement. We come for inspiration. We come to find healing and support and we come to lend support.

We come for learning. We come for spiritual growth. We come when we need to be reminded that we are not alone.

We come for the experience of Christ's presence in our lives. You know, I love how John's gospel describes Jesus calling his first disciples. Andrew and his friends have heard of Jesus and when they approach him he turns to them and says, what are you looking for? And Andrew replies, Rabbi, where are you staying? Jesus says, come and see.

And they follow him and stand till four o'clock in the afternoon, we're told. I love that detail, four o'clock in the afternoon. The very next day Jesus finds Philip and he says to Philip, follow me.

Like Andrew and his friend, Philip follows. Philip then finds his buddy Nathaniel who's pretty skeptical that anything good like this Jesus character can come out of Nazareth. So Philip says to Nathaniel, come and see.

Nathaniel does just that and then he becomes a follower just like Philip and Andrew and Peter. You see the pattern here? Jesus doesn't offer them a strategic plan. He doesn't offer them a five-slide PowerPoint presentation.

He doesn't offer a philosophical argument. He doesn't offer them a lot of doctrine and dogma. He offers them a relationship.

He offers them an experience. He offers them what we all need, someone to follow and a place to be. Now that's why way back in about 1981, Zannie and I came to Trinity.

We didn't exactly articulate it that way at the time, but looking back over the years, that's why we landed here. Just starting our careers, raising a young family, overworked, overstressed, and underpaid. We were looking for a place of refreshment and healing, a place of inspiration and hope, a community that would take us in without judgment, a community where we could find something larger than our own small selves.

We were looking for someone to follow and a place to be, and that's what we found at Trinity. Over the next few years, we became more deeply invested in the life of this place. As we planted roots here, we came to understand that Trinity was our home.

Every ministry we became involved with, every small group and every class we joined, every worship service we participated in deepened our connection. And you know what else deepened our connection to Trinity? Our growing and deepening commitment of our financial resources to this place. Our commitment of our time and the commitment of our talents was important.

Yeah, that's for sure, but I'm going to tell you for darn sure just as important was the commitment of our money. We learned a simple but deep spiritual truth. The more we gave, the more we received.

And the return on that investment has been exponential. Now, we started simply. We read the Bible.

We learned that the people of Israel were commended by Yahweh to give to the temple, meaning giving to the work that God was doing in the world, and they were

commended to give from the first fruits of the harvest. In other words, to give off the top instead of to give out of what was left over at the end. And Yahweh gave them a number.

Ten percent of those first fruits. That was the expectation. And to this day, that's called the biblical time.

Ten percent of the first fruits. Now, to a young family, believe me, that seemed like a really steep hill to climb. So we started small.

We started at one percent of what we figured our income was likely to be, and then gradually moved to two percent and then to three percent. And finally, over the years, we arrived at the biblical time. Ten percent.

And we have never looked back. Now look, I'm not telling you this because I think we're special. We're not special at all.

We're pretty ordinary, in fact. I'm telling you this because it has been life-changing. You know, even though we are living in the most affluent society the world has ever known, the narrative we get from our culture is that we live in scarcity.

We live in the fear that there won't be enough. Not enough security. Not enough material possessions.

Not enough love. But the reality is that we live in abundance. That's the great paradox.

To live in the abundance of the world as God has created for us, we have to let go of our attachments to our stuff and start giving it away. To live abundantly, you have to give abundantly. In fact, the commitment to live abundantly is the only way through the fear of scarcity.

So as a practical matter, how's that happen? Well, here's one way. You're a vital part of Trinity's annual stewardship campaign in support of our operating budget. Here for good is the tagline.

We're all here at Trinity for good, you know. Here to imagine how to lead a good life. A life which includes being good to others and good to ourselves.

And a life doing good in the world. And this place, Trinity Church, a place that's been here for 180 years and which with our support will be here for generations to come. This solid, substantial place.

This place is truly here for good. It always has been and it always will be. Now you're going to be receiving extensive materials describing how your pledge dollars are put to work here in service of the mission of Christ.

Does Trinity need your pledge? You bet. There's an energy bill to pay and a sewage and water board bill to pay and maintenance and upkeep on these beautiful facilities. And this hard-working and dedicated and talented and faithful staff deserves to be paid a living wage.

Yes indeed, Trinity has needs. But you know what? I'm not suggesting you should give because Trinity has needs. I'm suggesting you should give because you have needs.

You have the same need I do and we all do. You have the need to be committed to something larger than yourself. You have the need to belong to something larger than yourself.

The need to live in hope and abundance instead of living in fear and scarcity. I mean that's why I give to Trinity. I give out of my own need.

My need to be a committed follower of the Lord Jesus Christ. My need to belong to a loving, compassionate, spirit-filled community. My need to live abundantly and faithfully.

Those are powerful needs in my life. And they sure outweigh my fear of scarcity. So as you're thinking and praying about your pledge this year, pray about it as a percentage of what's coming in your door.

First fruits giving the Bible calls it. Try setting a goal for yourself that you can work towards. Test my claim that this is the way forward out of the fear of scarcity and into the joy of abundance.

It's this kind of commitment that carries with it the joy of belonging. Jesus' disciples longed for that joy for belonging but didn't know how to go about it until they had Jesus' mighty witness of the sacrifice of real commitment. His commitment unlocked the door to belonging.

You don't carry anything else away from this sermon this morning. Carry this away. Commitment leads to belonging.

Commitment leads to belonging. For a deeper sense of belonging to something larger than yourself like Trinity, try making a deeper commitment of your money. Not because Trinity has needs but because you do.

Jesus concludes the parable of the wise manager by observing great gifts mean great responsibilities. The greater the gift, the greater the responsibility. The gift he was talking about that day is a priceless gift.

The gift he was talking about that day is the gift of the kingdom of heaven. And it's got nothing to do with whether you are worthy or deserving. But to fully embrace that gift though, there's something that is required of us.

Our very lives, ourselves, our souls, our bodies. You want the kingdom of heaven? You can't be an observer or a bystander. You want to belong to the kingdom? You've got to commit.

Amen.