

Have you ever had one of those moments where you catch yourself thinking, “Haven’t I heard this before?” Maybe it’s during the Gospel reading, or the sermon. You glance down at the leaflet and think, “Wait, didn’t we just talk about loving our neighbor... last week? And the week before that? And just last month?”

Admit it, we’ve all had those moments. The Gospel reading, the sermon, it all seems familiar, almost like a broken record. Love God. Love your neighbor. Be generous. Be kind. Forgive. Trust. Just the “*usual Jesus stuff*”, right?

The Gospel’s repetition is a gift. The Gospel isn’t a story we graduate from. It’s not something we master and move on from like an episode we’ve seen before. It’s a rhythm. A pattern. A heartbeat.

Every Sunday, we gather and hear what we’ve heard before...and yet somehow, it meets us in a new way. Because we’re not the same people we were last week. The world’s changed a little. We’ve changed a little. We’ve lost something, or gained something, or grown weary, or found hope again.

And so when the Gospel repeats itself: *love God, love your neighbor, trust grace, live generously*, it’s not because we’re slow learners. It’s because those truths are inexhaustible. They meet us right where we are, again and again. Like breathing. Like communion. Like love. They’re not meant to be novel, they’re meant to be nourishing.

I think we are slow learners sometimes. Not because we’re broken or bad or lazy, but because we’re human. Just human. The way God made us. And being human means we’re not perfect, and we’re not meant to be. And personally, I think perfection is overrated.

Because it’s not about being perfect, it’s about being persistent. It’s persistence that matters. Persistence is a sacred thing. Because love takes practice. Grace takes practice. We’re made to rely on God. And we’re made to rely on each other.

So the Gospel meets us again and again, right where we are, in our ordinary days, with our weary hearts, and our distracted minds, and says, “*Let’s try this again. Love. Forgive. Trust. Hope.*”

The Gospel’s not shaming us for forgetting; it’s simply reminding us who we are — and whose we are. *And honestly, thank goodness. Because if salvation depended on my memory or attention span, we’d be in real trouble.*

Take Jeremiah. He’s standing in a city under siege. The walls are closing in. Everything looks lost. And in the middle of all that chaos, God tells him to buy a field.

Now, think about that. Not a very smart investment. In fact, a ridiculous one. The land's worthless; the Babylonians are literally taking it over. But Jeremiah buys it anyway—not because it makes sense, but because it's faithful. It's his way of saying, *"I still believe in God's promise. I still believe there will be life and laughter and planting and harvest again."*

He acts as if God's future is real, even when the present looks impossible.

That's the message at the heart of this week's scriptures. Jeremiah buys a field. The psalmist sings of shelter and refuge. Paul urges contentment and generosity. And Jesus tells a story of a rich man and a poor man divided by a gulf that could've been crossed so easily...if only the rich man had acted on what he already knew.

Because here's the truth: the rich man didn't need new information. He didn't need a sign or a sermon or a miracle. He'd heard it all before—in the Law, in the prophets, in his own tradition. He knew the words—but he hadn't let them change his life.

The message wasn't missing. It was ignored.

Maybe that's why we keep hearing the same Gospel. Because the point isn't to learn something new. The point is to let what we already know sink in. Sink deeper into our bones, our habits, our choices, our relationships.

The Gospel isn't just information. It's formation. It shapes us, little by little, Sunday by Sunday, prayer by prayer. Like water over stone, it wears new grooves into our hearts.

That's what our liturgy does, too. Each week we pray many of the same words. We partake of the same meal. All here, in the same peace. And yet, we keep coming back. Because somehow, the same words still speak life to us.

Repetition doesn't mean we're stuck. It means we're being formed by God's hands. And if that feels slow...well, so is grace. And thank God for that.

So maybe, just maybe, we need that repetition now more than ever. Because every week, the world still tries to hand us a thousand other messages:

That you are what you produce.

That wealth equals worth.

That difference should be feared.

That nothing really changes anyway, so why bother?

And every week, the Gospel answers back like a steady heartbeat:

You are beloved.
You are enough.
You belong.
Love still matters.
Justice is still possible.
Grace still wins.

That's why we keep saying it. Because the world keeps lying to us. And the Church—God bless her stubborn, hopeful heart—just keeps telling the truth.

My favorite snarky preacher, Nadia Bolz-Weber, once said, *"The Gospel isn't meant to make us comfortable; it's meant to make us new."* And becoming new together takes time, and patience, and holy repetition.

So what do we do with a Gospel we've heard before? We live it once again. We live as if God's future is real. Even when it feels far away. Even when it sounds too simple. Showing up again, for worship, for justice, for love.

Like Jeremiah, we buy fields in burning cities.
Like the psalmist, we keep singing songs of trust.
Like Timothy, we practice contentment and gentleness.
Like Lazarus, we wait to be seen.
And like Christ, we cross the gulf that divides.

My favorite snarky Christian writer and podcaster, Jon Fugelsang says, *"Jesus hung out with the people your mother warned you about. He loved the ones the world ignored. And he built his church out of people who'd been told they weren't good enough."*

It's not a new message. It's the good news.

So yes, you've heard it before. You'll hear it again next week. And probably the week after that. Because it's the same story. And it's still saving us.

The story that tells us who we are. The story that reminds us what matters. The story that keeps us buying fields, crossing gulfs, and building bridges in a world that keeps forgetting.

The message is the same....because our God is the same; faithful, loving, and still creating something new.

So, let's love God. Let's love our neighbor. Let's live as if God's future is real. Because it is. And because the world still needs people who believe it.

Proper 21C

One more time

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Amen.