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Let us pray.

Heavenly Father we give you thanks and praise for this day We ask your blessing upon us as we enter into this time of study. May your Holy Spirit open our hearts that we might hear your voice. May your word be spoken and your word received in the name of the Father and of the Son and of the Holy spirit.

We hear today in the Gospel a parable that Jesus tells that illustrates the priorities of the Kingdom of God and challenges those who have the financial resources to make sure that they are caring for those who are in need. And as the Pharisees hear this parable and as it's set in in the text of Luke's gospel, you have to remember we've moved from being told the story of the shrewd manager and then Jesus talks some more about the Pharisees in between what we've heard today, challenging them about their love for money. And then we hear this parable proclaimed today. And one thing that certainly would have been striking to the Pharisees is that as this story unfolds and they begin to hear about a rich man and a beggar, that when it comes time for the part of the story where we're told who is the righteous one and should receive the reward, all of the Pharisees would expect that the rich man receives the reward, not the beggar.

And to us, we may scratch our heads and say, well why would they automatically assume that? But if you scour through much of the writings of the Old Testament, what you will find is an understanding of riches and outward blessing being a sign of your inward righteousness. And so this concept of a righteous, poor beggar with these sores, it's just not computing. You know? And if you think back to what you hear in the Book of Job, who we know, having heard the whole story that this is a righteous guy, but all of his friends keep saying coming and saying, well, you must have done something. That's why you're suffering like this. Nobody who's righteous would suffer like this. Just give it up and curse God and die already cause you must have sinned somewhere. And so Jesus once again tells a parable that turns the table on what is the ordinary expectation of the day of who should be the hero in the story and they would all expect the rich man is the hero and Jesus should then say, and this sinner is here because of something he did. But Jesus flips that because the kingdom of God flips all what is our human understanding and way of doing things real. As the kingdom of God breaks into the world, it changes and transforms our whole understanding.

And so Jesus paints this picture then and reminds us of the focus on the things that are important and not on the things that are passing away. Once again, just like the shrewd manager, the focus was on the worldly and what the world would say is important.

And Jesus challenges this rich man in this story as we hear who clearly could have done something to alleviate this person's need right outside the gate. He didn't have to go looking far and we find that he was just left there. But in the kingdom of God, his table is turned and the rich man then should have been caring for the need of the poor. And that's just as Jesus says, you know, then he begs and says, well send somebody. In the story we're told, well send somebody to tell my brother. And Jesus says, well, they have Moses and the prophets is what Jesus said Abraham said, let them listen to them. And if they were listening to Moses and the prophets, if you scour those sections of the old Testament, you'd find lots of verses that tell you how to care for those in need. And not only that, in those books, you will also find the texts that point to a coming Messiah and what he will do. And there he is right in front of them and they don't recognize that he's the Messiah that's been spoken about. And if the rich guy's not caring for the one in need, then they've missed all those other verses that said, Oh, by the way, care for the poor. It comes up over and over and over again.

But they have emphasized this witch's portion as a sign of God's blessing over and above everything else.

And I think this rightly follows the story that we heard about the steward because then we're charged to ask, well, how are we stewarding what God has given us?

And they tried to beg and say, well, no, if somebody comes from the dead, they'll understand. Then the brothers would believe, I know they had all the other books, but just send this guy from the dead and everything will be fine with them. And Jesus on his way to Jerusalem, who knowing he will die and rise again. He knows that even after the resurrection, they don't believe that he is who he said he was.

And so if we were to order then our lives rightly, that's what Paul is charging Timothy with as he writes that portion of the letter that we heard proclaimed as he says, but godliness with contentment is great gain for we brought nothing into the world and we can take nothing out of it. And if that statement is true, which we know that it is, and many would, would give the image that you never see a u-haul in the funeral procession because you're not taking any of it with ya. But where do we spend all of our thought and toil and worry and focus more often than not on the things that we're not taken with us and the things that are eternal are an afterthought that we fit in.

And that may make us a little bit uncomfortable to think about that. But if we look in two places, our calendar and our checkbooks are going to give a big indication of where our priorities are. And I don't know about you, but I don't always like to look there. Even in in the calendar of the, the busy-ness of ministry, I as your priest can easily get focused on all these things that are passing away. And we have budgets and buildings and personnel and all these things, and we've got a printed bulletin and we have all these things that happen all the time. And I could spend hours and hours and hours and think, Oh, well, isn't this wonderful? We're getting all this, this stuff done? But if that's my whole focus, I'm missing the point. Those things serve our worship so that we can focus on the things that are eternal, but it's gotta be the right priority. And if I say, well, I have to do all these important things, and then when I get them done, maybe I'll have time to pray or study the scripture. Those need to be first in my life and in yours. And so the calendar needs to be crafted around the things that are the priority.

And the checks need to be written from the checkbook in the order of the things that are a priority and in service to the things that are eternal, which is what Paul charges. But if we have food and clothing, we will be content with that.

Well, raise your hand if you have food and clothing. That's everybody. Now, how many of us feel content? Not so many hands would spring up. Right? Because much of what we hear around us, it's almost as if we're never to be content. No matter if you have your dream job, there's a bigger dream out there. If you're content in your house, well, you should dream for a bigger house or your car should be fancier or you should have more money or there's always something you know and advertisers are good on catching that. All the advertisements on TV are telling you all the things you don't have, which make you not content. And if you just buy this thing in the next 10 minutes and call now and get your bonus, then you'll be content. Your life will be complete. This is the one thing you're missing. And that could go on forever because once you buy that, the next advertisement, it says you need their thing and then you think, well wait a minute and maybe I'm not happy. Maybe I'm not content. Maybe if I did have that, life would be different.

You know, what if we, what would our life look like if we take this as Paul says and say, well, if we have food and clothing, we'll be content. We have everything we need for the day. What more do we need? What more needs to worry us? And then we spend the rest of our day as Paul charges Timothy in pursuing those things that are going to last as he says, you are a man of God. Flee from all of this pursuit of the love of money that's passing away. Pursue righteousness, godliness, faith, love, endurance and gentleness. Fight the good fight of faith. Take hold of the eternal life to which you are called. All of those things that Paul charges Timothy to focus on. That's the building up of the life that lasts. The life eternal. When Jesus returns again and ushers in a new creation, the story doesn't say.

And then he also recreate your bank and your job and we just sort of, we have this vision almost that the life with Jesus in the end looks exactly like it does now only we don't get sick or die. But we sort of live in like the same neighborhood and all of our relatives are there and we play golf once a week and it's beautiful. But we forget everything is going to be changed and transformrd. We're not going to get up and go to work. We're going to have everything that we need. Jesus will be our, all in all, we'll be in the presence of God. He's not going to resurrect our banks and you have to go get ATM and get your money. I mean, we have this vision of the creation to come exactly like it is now, but it's not going to be.

And so those things that Paul charges Timothy to pursue are only developed in his relationship with the Lord. They're not just going to happen on their own. Righteousness, godliness, faith, love, endurance, gentleness. Take hold of that, that will last. And as this portion of the letter ends, he says, take hold of the life that is truly life. The whole point is to say, say to Timothy, don't get distracted. Stay focused on the life that is important. Now, that doesn't mean that we're all called to just be a hermit in the desert somewhere and we just have our little hut and our Bibles and we just pray 24 seven and that's it. Well, if that's what you're called, then go where God calls you to. But the rest of us are living this life in the midst of the here and now. We can't just say, all right, fine, shut the doors and pretend like the world's not going

on. We still have to go to work. You still have to take care of our houses. You have to mow the lawn. We have to wash the clothes and the dishes. I mean, these are all things that still have to happen. We're still in the here and now in the world, but it really comes down to Jesus saying over and over again, where is your priority and your focus.

So those things can be the priority and the focus and the all in all, all we can recognize that there are things we have to do, but they're also part of the creation that's passing away. So can we do them in the right priority? And in all that we do, can we pursue godliness, faith, love, endurance, patience, gentleness. What does life look like then? You can't really pursue those things and just try to be the richest, most powerful person in the world at the same time because they will negate each other in order to be the richest, most powerful person. I guarantee you, you don't get there in the business world by being righteous, godly, faithful, loving, gentle patient. You just squash people and plow ahead and whatever's going to get you to the top. I mean, that's how you get through that sort of cutthroat standing to the top. So these cannot be pursued together, which is what Paul charges Timothy, don't get distracted you have food, you have clothing, you have everything you need now pursue the life that God's called you to the life that will endure and enter into that relationship with God in the here and now. And you know what? That changes the here and now all of a sudden we're not so anxious about the things that aren't important

and we don't get there instantaneously, but we start to see it in the priority and maybe things aren't great in our job or maybe our house needs a giant repair or maybe we don't have money to do this, that, or the other thing. Or maybe our health isn't the greatest right now. But we can say that's not the, all in all, that's not the end. And no matter how great my health is, or if when I have everything fixed in my house, in the car never breaks and I have all the money that I need in the end, all those still pass away. Jesus doesn't say, well, you've worked so hard to get all this money and your house is so beautiful, let's just leave it the way it is. I mean, it's just not how it goes. He's either going to return or we die and return to him and none of those things go with you.

So I would challenge each of us, myself at the top of the list, to take a look at your calendar for the month. Take a look at your checkbook for the month and say, does that line up? And if that's all somebody saw was my calendar and my finances, would they put on the list the things that I say are the priority? Or would they say something else as the priority would? The way that I'm spending my time and my resources show that I'm caring for the poor, that I'm pursuing godliness and righteousness and patience and faith and all of these things that Paul charges Timothy to. Is that what they would accuse me of if the only evidence was my calendar and my finances?

And we may squirm a little bit in saying, I'd rather not do that exercise. But you know, we always ask, well, how do I know I'm doing the right thing? So much of our faith journey is non-tangible, and we say, well, how am I supposed to know? Well, here's a tool. We can look at those things. That's not the end all, but it's a barometer that we can use and say, how am I doing? And the great thing about Jesus is when you look at that, you don't just have to sulk and say, Oh, I blew it. Look at my calendar. It's a disaster. Jesus calls us to examine these things because we get to start again.

So thanks be to God. He calls us to examine our life. The Holy spirit shows us things not to say, you blew it, you're out of the family. We told ya and you didn't listen. No. He calls us to say, look, and I will help you on a new path. So the things can be better and refocus and you may have his joy and have it to the fullest in your life may be complete. And you're pursuing all of those right things. That's the Holy Spirit in us to lead us and guide us. So never be afraid to take an honest look because God's waiting to lift us up and to raise and transform us in that. Not stand with a scowl and condemnation to say, why did you do that? So may we hear the call of God today and may his Holy spirit change and transform us as we pursue that life that is really life and that will last forever.

Let us pray, Lord Jesus, we give you thanks and praise for this day. As we are seated here, we acknowledge that we have food, we have clothing, we should be content in you. And we pray that your Holy Spirit would strip away from us anything in our life that has caused us a discontent. Any places in our life where we're envious of others, where we're longing for more or something additional. And Lord we know that that never satisfies and it never ends. There's always something more we could want for. We pray that your Holy Spirit would draw us closer to you Lord each and every single day. May our lives be changed and transformed. And may they be lived to your honor and glory.

In Jesus' name we pray.