

Love begins with Trust

A sermon shared with the congregation of St. Andrew's United Church

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by Rev. Dave Le Grand

I purchased an electronics item a couple of years ago and it was that moment we all experience in our modern times. The question from the clerk that makes you think, "Would you like to purchase a warranty?"

A voice in my mind warns at that very moment, "If you don't buy the warranty, the thing will break down. Buy the warranty and you won't need it." Have you heard that voice?

Kahlil Gibran put this pattern poetically:

Our anxiety does not come from thinking about the future, but from wanting to control it. [The Prophet. Kahlil Gibran. © 2010 Rupa & Co (first published in 1923)]

Thanksgiving, I am ambivalent about it. I have wonderful memories of family and friends eating together, and a powerful sense of gratitude fills me as I remember. My ambivalence arises out of history, a complex history. Not the revisionist history of European pilgrims hosting the First Peoples, the Wampanoag (Wam pa no ag) in a first thanksgiving banquet. Closer to the truth is a picture of Indigenous of Plymouth, offering hospitality to immigrants and about the same time to the north, the Mi'kmaq offering hospitality to Samuel de Champlain and the European immigrants.

The people who inhabited Turtle Island long before colonization offered thanksgiving in many of their ceremonies. I can only celebrate Thanksgiving when I acknowledge this difficult history, and as we enjoy turkey, potatoes, vegetables, we resolve to let go of our privilege, control, and to work for reconciliation.¹

"Why worry?" Asks Jesus, pointing rhetorically at the wildflowers. This is not the kind of worry we might have standing in front of the mirror and worrying about our clothes clashing. Clothes in the ancient Palestine context of Jesus set apart the small percentage of very rich and powerful from the peasants – fishing folk, tradespeople & merchants.

We cannot serve two masters – God and Mammon. The Greek word for "Mammon" is not intended to be negative. It is simply wealth. Some people were wealthy in Jesus' time, but that didn't mean that they were not able to live virtuous lives. Whatever material possessions you have; does worry about it, or not having enough of it, dominate your life? Having "stuff" is not the problem for Jesus.

The problem arises when we don't see that what we have is God's first. We can ask the question: What do I need most – comfort or utter dependence on God?

Trust. Look at the birds... Look at the lilies. Says Jesus. Unconditional Love is grounded in such a trust; a deep abiding sense that life, all that I am, all that I have, is a gift first from God. I am a gift from God. Being utterly dependent on the land, one another, on Creator, is a difficult thing to grasp.

¹ Douglas Todd. The Vancouver Sun, October 8, 2021. <https://vancouversun.com/opinion/columnists/douglas-todd-indigenous-canadians-differ-from-native-americans-over-thanksgiving>

How might a business person understand this passage? I found an interesting website called the "Theology of Work" project; this passage seen from a business owner's perspective. In a video testimonial the person points out how Jesus says in verse 21, before today's Gospel:²

Where your treasure is, there will your heart be also.

We might expect this sentence to run the other way, "Where your heart is, there your treasure will be also." Says the business person. But Jesus' actual words are more profound. Money changes the heart more than the heart decides how to handle money. We who are blessed to have possessions must be mindful that "the possessions [we] own [don't] change [us] so that [we] care more about them than about other things."

I'm feel fortunate not to have such a burden, of having wealth.

"But hold on, Dave." Says Jesus. We all have things that are precious to us. Jobs, social status, relationships, privilege, talents, Perhaps it is respect among peers that we would not want to jeopardize.

There was once a circus performer who made a living by pushing a wheelbarrow across a high wire that spanned an abyss. The crowds came out in droves to watch him and to cheer him on.

"Do you believe I can do it?" he would ask them.

"Oh, yes! We believe you can do it," they chorused back in acclamation.

"So, who's going to get in the wheelbarrow?" he asked. Silence fell.³

Do we trust enough to get into the wheelbarrow? At the heart of Jesus' teaching to love our neighbour is learning to trust in God's love and that God will provide.

² To find the article and video, <https://www.theologyofwork.org/new-testament/matthew/the-kingdom-of-heaven-at-work-in-us-matthew-5-7/wealth-and-provision-matthew-6/store-your-treasure-in-heaven-not-on-earth-matthew-619-34>

³ Margaret Silf, *The Other Side of Chaos*. © 2011 Loyola Press, 2011, page 37