

Good morning, & welcome as we gather for this special day of worship — when St. Luke's joins with St. Tom's to be renewed in the Spirit of faith, hope, & love. Our service today reminds us that the Church is not defined by walls, names, or locations, but rather the Church IS the people of God *being the people of God*. In our Collect of the Day, we asked that we — the Church — “being gathered by [God's] Holy Spirit into one, may show forth [God's] power among all peoples.” That power is not domination or force. God's power is on fullest display in unity, in mercy, in love.

And here we are... In this world so fractured by divisions, God's Spirit calls us into *communion* — something deeper than affiliation — into the very life of God. Wherever two or three are gathered together in Christ's name, we proclaim that Christ is bigger than our boundaries, & that the Holy Spirit is at work, busily weaving us into one body to the glory of God. Left to ourselves, humans have a way of sowing divisions. And so, in our gathering today, we celebrate what unites us: Word & Sacrament, prayer & praise, & the deep bonds of fellowship that transcend parish boundaries. And so, I invite you to take joy in this moment of shared worship, where all our voices blend in praise. May this time — including our potluck lunch after the service — deepen our fellowship & renew our call to be *one Church*, shining together as a light in the world.

Turning to our readings today, God's Word invites us to take a hard, honest look into our hearts — & to ask ourselves, *Where have we placed our hope?*

In his first letter to Timothy, Paul says something that goes *directly against* the tune set by the world: "There is great gain in godliness with contentment."

Those words "great gain" and "contentment" often figure in our marketplaces of ideas — probably half or more of the influencer economy is based in these — but Paul is *not* talking about success or wealth or the comforts of the flesh. Paul is talking about a *life rooted in God* — shaped by reverence, humility, & steady trust (in other words, being happy with what we have) — these, and only these qualities, allow us to live at peace — in the spirit of humility & gratitude — rather than being weighed down by the endless pursuit of material things.

In this way of seeing, *to be godlike isn't just believing in God: it's letting our whole life be formed by God's presence & values, living in a way that reflects God's own character.*

Paul doesn't say it will be easy. In a world that is constantly shouting "MORE IS BETTER," Paul flips the script to assure us that abundance is not something to

be measured by bank accounts & assets but in confidence that — whatever we may have — we live in God's hand. *True wealth is spiritual*. Knowing this is the first step towards flourishing as God's people.

As with last week's letter, Paul isn't railing against wealth but against *the love of it*. Because when money becomes the centre of our lives, we lose our way. Paul directs us to be satisfied with what we have, instead of always reaching for more. It's not about giving up or settling; it's about trusting that what God provides for us this day *is enough*. And that definitely means *not* worrying about what we will have tomorrow. "We brought nothing into the world, & we can take nothing out of it." Everything we have—our resources, our time, our energy—is a gift. And so the question to ask is not how much do we have but *how are we using what we've been entrusted with?*

This is where we turn to the Gospel from Luke, to be reminded that, though the sun might shine equally on the evil & on the good, God is a judge — & he does not take kindly to the stingy. To spell it out for us, Jesus tells the story of a rich man & a poor beggar named Lazarus. The rich man lived in luxury, feasting every day. Lazarus, covered in sores, lay just outside his gate — hungry, suffering, ignored. When they both die, their roles are reversed. Lazarus is comforted. The rich man is in torment.

And here's the haunting part: the rich man didn't go to hell because he was rich. He went because he did nothing. Lazarus was right there, within reach. The rich man walked past him every single day. From all appearances, the man had it all — but he was blind. Blind to the fact that with privilege comes responsibility.

Jesus ends the story with a warning to those of us who enjoy the privileges but wash our hands of helping others: we've been entrusted with the Gospel. But the question remains, *Will we listen?*

God calls us to be generous—not out of guilt, but out of grace. So hear this clearly: You are not saved by your generosity. But if you belong to Jesus, your life will show it — by how you love, how you give, & how you treat those outside the gates. And so, let's keep fighting the good fight of faith. Let us be rich in good works, & ever-ready to share. And let us place our hope, not in what we have, but in the God who richly provides everything—for His glory & for your joy. So let today not be an exception, but a beginning — a glimpse of what God desires for the whole Church. May our worship not end with the final hymn, but continue in lives joined in mission, in love, & in hope. In the name of God Almighty — the Father, the Son, & the Holy Spirit. Amen.