

Message: Putting all your eggs in one basket!!

Both the reading in Hebrews and the gospel of Luke refer to having faith - that God will provide for us.

In our gospel reading Jesus opens with the words, “Do not be afraid, little flock,” and then goes straight into the words, “Sell your possessions, and give away money to the poor because God will provide for you.”

Boy oh boy. That is a heavy one and I thought this reading was rather ironic, given the present situation in the Uniting Church. So we just have to trust that God will help us find a way through this situation that will have a better outcome than what we could have imagined.

Although it may be the folly of others which put you in an awkward situation, God will always see us through and something good will **ULTIMATELY** come out of it - although it may be difficult to see this at the time.

You may feel helpless and insignificant, I know I often do, however, God says not to be afraid. We are one of His flock, created in his image with love and he will provide for each one of us. What I think he is saying - is to divest ourselves of surplus things – does that sound familiar! To live your life simply and share generously what you have with those in need.

Commit yourself to a new investment strategy – put all your eggs in God’s basket. By investing in God you are not at the mercy of other people who may bear false witness or rob you. If you base your life on the teachings of Jesus and set your heart on the treasures that God can provide, your investment can never be devalued. It is commonly known that wherever you make your greatest investment - this will be where you will exert your greatest energy.

To continue in regard to selling your possessions - It doesn’t say sell and give in order that you might receive the kingdom, but it is rather confronting.

Why does Jesus speak so much about this issue, about money and material possessions? On looking further, the answer is right here, because where your treasure is, there your heart will be also. And perhaps there is nothing else that can seduce us away from the things that really matter faster than money or the pursuit of it.

Nathan Nettleton, in one of his sermon’s asked about the place that Christian faith occupies in our lives. Does Christianity just occupy a defined place in our lives and if so what is it doing making claims on other areas of our lives? Like

our money for example. Or do our lives occupy a place in the reign of Christ and everything is up for grabs?

We want meaning, we want purpose, we want spiritual growth, we want fullness of life, BUT we want it to fit in comfortably with our chosen careers and lifestyles. We want a Christianity that will be the icing on the cake, not something that will trash the cake and we have to start again from scratch. Or for those of you who now speak computer language, we want a Christianity that has a user-friendly platform, with compatible add-ons, not a Christianity that overrides the operating system and installs a radically different version.

We live in a culture that trains us quite early to approach everything that way. “What does this have to offer that I could benefit from? What is available here that would make a welcome addition to my life?” For every possible desire there is a vendor offering it to those who seek it.

Do I need a break, some time out? There’s the travel agent with a rock bottom price for a week in some exotic place.

Do I need to unravel my complicated feelings about my relationship? There’s a psychologist offering an appointment next week.

Do I need to appease my hunger for spirit or strengthen my sense of connection with the mysteries of life? There’s a church where I can pick up this week’s worship and sermon session at a time convenient to us.

The church becomes one more vendor supplying another product in response to consumer demand. Christian faith and spirituality become one more product out there in the market place. Pick some up whenever you feel the need. ++

And why should it be any different we might ask. Why should the church and Christian faith be exempted from competing in the market place like everything else? I’m actually not suggesting that it should be exempted from competing like everything else BUT that we should wake up and realize what it is competing for.

If you want to install Christianity on the hard disk of your life, you will have to uninstall the previous operating system. You can’t run it on top of Consumer 98 or Windows Money Sex & Power. Contrary to much publicity you can’t even run it on top of Traditional Family Values 55. Christianity is not an add-on or even a general application. It is an integrated operating system, incompatible with other operating systems, and it dictates what else can be run with it.

The thing is, sometimes an incompatibility doesn’t show up straight away.

Sometimes it just starts corrupting things and causing seemingly random malfunctions until eventually the whole system crashes. So it is with attempting to retain incompatible applications with your new Christianity operating system.

However, If nothing in your life has ever caused a significant compatibility problem with your Christianity, then maybe you haven't installed Christianity at all, you've just got its icon sitting benignly on your desktop while you continue to run the old system.

Let me give you another illustration for those of you who aren't into computers. When you are faced with a new situation, there is always a level of anxiety about it. And one of the main reasons for that anxiety is that one may need to make adjustments that take you out of your comfort zone. You may need to re-assess your priorities and let go of some things you previously thought to be important.

Have you observed that the people who've managed to accumulate power and trophies don't seem to me to be any less anxious or any more at peace in their hearts than the people who are having to decide what to go without this week - toilet paper, bread or butter.

People who have attained great monetary wealth or great sporting achievements still have anxieties. Only they're anxious about different things most of the time, but just as anxious. They still have to buy toilet paper, butter and coffee or tea. However, every now and then something pulls the rug out from under their comfort zone and calls them to put things back in perspective.

Some time ago, in an interview with Ringo Starr, the drummer from the Beatles, spoke about how when his daughter was diagnosed as having a brain tumour he suddenly realized that in the face of this, all the fame and fortune was not worth a thing.

“Do not be afraid, little flock, it is your Father's good pleasure to give you the Kingdom.” The good news is - new life in Jesus Christ is still a free gift. Meaning, purpose, hope, peace, fullness of life - are all a free gift from the God who loves you and longs to bless you more richly than you could ever imagine.

It is a free gift to everyone who will accept it.

But I could hand out free copies of Windows 7 or 8 too, and unless you uninstalled your earlier versions of your operating system on your computer it's a pretty useless gift.

I suppose you could use it as a drink coaster or something similar.

I could hand out free Bibles but only those who read them will benefit. Those who put them aside will not comprehend the significance of the free gift.

“Do not be afraid, little flock, it is your Father’s good pleasure to give you the Kingdom.” You can file a few Christian values and experiences in a little spiritual compartment of your life, or you can open up everything and receive the free gift of the Kingdom.

You can put all your eggs in one basket – In God’s basket, even when the very existence of the basket must be taken on trust and hope. It was Abraham’s faith and trust in God that enabled him to uproot himself and emigrate, although he had no idea where or what he was headed for – he just kept going. Even when he eventually arrived in the promised land, he had to camp out like a refugee. However, he was sustained by his faith and a vision that a city would be founded, designed and built by God. His faith was vindicated and he founded a dynasty.

Be prepared for what challenges you face by investing and having faith in God’s basket. In this way your life will be richer, more meaningful and more sustainable and you will be surprised at what joyous surprises are awaiting you, just out of sight, around the bend in the road.

I know that I personally have received riches beyond my imagining, just by putting my eggs in one basket – God’s basket – and marvelled at how they hatched.

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Adapted from a sermon on Luke 12:32-40 by Nathan Nettleton