

The blessed, beloved community
CCUM - 7 Aug 2016

As I thought about the message for this morning, I knew we would have just experienced another of our always awesome rummage sales. This is such a blessed community event for us, yes lots of time and effort by many people. And I'll bet some pretty tired folks this morning. For many years we have opened our doors to the larger community and invited them in, to experience some of the blessings we can give as we share from our abundance.

On Sunday mornings, our lectionary scriptures give us another way to connect with a much larger community, the Christian community in other churches near and far, many of whom are hearing these same ancient, holy scriptures and finding the common thread that joins us all.

This morning, the passage from Luke 12: 32-38 has done this for me. I wonder if you'll agree.

32 "Don't be afraid, [brothers and sisters], because God delights in [opening the doors of] the kingdom. 33 Sell your possessions and give to those in need. Make for yourselves wallets that don't wear out—a treasure in heaven that never runs out. 34 Where your treasure is, there your heart will be, too.

35 "Be dressed for service and keep your lamps lit. 36 Be like people waiting for their master to come home from a wedding celebration, who can immediately open the door for him when he arrives. 37 Happy are those servants whom the master finds waiting up when he arrives. ... He will dress himself to serve, seat them at the table as honored guests, and wait on them. 38 Happy are those whom he finds alert, even if he comes at midnight or just before dawn.

Our yearly rummage sale is deeply rooted in community. We had our doors

open, waiting to be of service. “Where your treasure is, there your heart will be, too.” We have offered our hearts in service to each other, to our Christ Church family, and to the community over the last several weeks.

I’ve asked Myra to share some stories from this year’s rummage sale.

We have heard that “where two or more are gathered in my name, there am I among them.” Christ is among us. Christ’s message of love and service guides us.

Hear this parable from Megan McKenna

"Once upon a time there was an abbot of a monastery who was very good friends with the rabbi of a local synagogue. It was Europe, and times were hard. Sometimes the rabbi would come and pour out his soul with the abbot and the abbot would encourage him; other times the abbot would visit his friend the rabbi and pour out his difficulties and be comforted by the rabbi.

"The abbot found his community dwindling and the faith life of his monks shallow and lifeless. Life in the monastery was dying. He went to his friend and wept. His friend, the rabbi, comforted him and told him: 'There is something you need to know, my brother. We have long known in the Jewish community that the Messiah is one of you.'

" 'What,' exclaimed the abbot, 'the Messiah is one of us? How can that be?'

"But the rabbi insisted that it was so, and the abbot went back to his monastery wondering and praying, comforted and excited.

"Once back in the monastery, walking down the halls and in the courtyard, he would pass by a monk and wonder if he was the one. Sitting in chapel, praying, he would hear a voice and look intently at a face and wonder if he was the one. And he began to treat all of his brothers with respect, with kindness and awe, with reverence. Soon it became quite noticeable.

"One of the brothers came to him and asked him what had happened to him. After some coaxing, he told him what the rabbi had said. Soon the other monk was looking at his brothers differently and wondering. The word spread through the monastery quickly: the Messiah is one of us. Soon the whole monastery was full of life, worship, kindness, and grace. The prayer life was rich and passionate, devoted, and the psalms and liturgy and services were alive and vibrant. Soon the surrounding villagers were coming to the services and listening and watching intently, and there were many who wished to join the community.

"After their novitiate, when they took their vows, they were told the mystery, the truth that their life was based upon, the source of their strength and life together: The Messiah is one of us. The monastery grew and expanded into house after house, and all of the monks grew in wisdom, age, and grace before the others and the eyes of God. And they say still, if you stumble across this place, where there is life and hope and kindness and graciousness, that the secret is the same: The Messiah is one of us."

In the busyness of our daily lives, we can get caught up in the stuff of life.... in the musts and the have-tos and the shoulds. We can become overwhelmed

by many distractions. Sometimes we listen to so much of the sensationalized news that we begin to believe that the world is a very scary place. WE need reminders that God is Good. That most people try hard and want the best for their loved ones. One of the reasons we come to church is to remember this.... to remember what we truly treasure....community, connection, service. We remember that we are loved.... and we are called to love.

Thanks to all those who participated in this blessed community, in the giving and in the receiving. We expanded our hearts and opened our doors.

What if we truly believe that “The Messiah/The Christ is among us” How might this continue to shape our ministry here?

Let us sing together, “There’s a spirit of love in this place”