



St Andrew's Parish Church Guernsey
Sunday, 25 September 2022 – Trinity 15
Readings: 1 Timothy 6: 6-19 & St Luke 16: 19-end
Given by Rev Juliette E C Robilliard

What we possess, possesses us

The Bible readings this morning do not pull their punches both require us to focus on money and the use we make of it. Thinking back to last Monday's services for the late Queen, the feature that struck me most poignantly was when at St George's Chapel Windsor the orb, sceptre and, finally, the crown, were removed from the Queen's coffin. What a reminder that irrespective of status or wealth, materially, as St Paul wrote to Timothy, we brought nothing into this world and, we can take nothing out.

Heaven v hell

In the Gospel, the rich man, who features in the parable, learnt the hard way that beyond the grave, he could do nothing to right his wrongs. He had not grasped the enormity of his former heartlessness hoping in death that Lazarus, whom he had totally ignored in life, would stoop to be kind to him, cool his tongue and quench the flames. Then, too late in his self-indulgent existence he thought of others pleading that someone be sent back from the dead to his five brothers to warn them. Jesus, foretelling his own resurrection, states even then not all people would believe. Abraham's responses, little-by-little, pointed up to the formerly rich man, now eternally impoverished, that there was a great gulf between him and Lazarus, who had entered into the joys and riches of heaven. Too often in life possessions become the stumbling block that prevent people from acting appropriately.

Effective management of reserves

So, what is an effective way to use possessions purposefully in everyday living? Doubtless, we all give to good causes, whilst recognising that we have a need to provide food, clothing and, a roof over our own heads retaining a prudent reserve to pay our regular bills, as well as the occasional unexpected expenses. However, when is enough more than enough? When does the surplus become a controlling distraction preventing us from seeing the needs of others, leading us to sin through negligence of thought word, word and deed? Let's look at this from Lazarus' perspective. In life, he had no possessions at all and yet, he was received into the joys and riches of heaven. Additionally, let us not forget, the physical and mental gifts of creation granted to us at birth gradually ebb away with time. For instance, the older we become, walking up Berthelot Street becomes more challenging than when we were teenagers! So, how do we create reverses that are never depleted whatever our age which, like Lazarus, carry us into eternal life? St Paul writing to Timothy stated: 'We are to do good, to be rich in good works, generous, ready to share thus storing up for ourselves

treasure of a good foundation for the future, so that we might take hold of life that really is life.'

Living life fruitfully

What sort of life is that? Well, when we arrive at church, we do not have to present our bank statements to guarantee that we can help the church to pay its way. Rather, irrespective of our material means, worshipping is to provide equality for everyone. To be able to give caringly to others, we first need to receive. Through faith, all of us are offered the free gifts of the Holy Spirit which, when we put them to good use, bear fruit of 'love, joy, peace, patience, kindness, goodness, faithfulness, gentleness and self-control'. And these cost us nothing to share: in fact, they multiply the more we use them.

Time to put more in

The further good news is happily, we're not dead yet! Lazarus will have to wait a while for our company. So, we still have time to contribute even more living resources by giving thanks, seeking forgiveness, reading the Bible and, time to pray, not so much asking for a share of God's goodness but asking for his direction in using the resources he provides. Undertaking this as a daily routine adds value enabling us to discern spiritual attributes about ourselves that help us to build God's kingdom. Speaking personally, it is from that daily routine, I have discovered the courage to share my faith. I pray fervently that what I share are God-inspired words that will bear fruit far longer than any amount of money ever could.

Contentment in life and beyond ...

In essence, all that I have been talking about is summarised in today's Collect perfectly, 'Grant that your people may be fervent in the fellowship of the gospel that, always abiding in you, they may be found steadfast in faith and active in service.' If we do that, money will seem less loveable and not a reason for living but an earthly convenience that facilitates sharing. True contentment in life comes from Christ living and working within us, treasure that will see us into eternity. One final question for reflection, "How contented spiritually do we feel? Amen.