

## Trinity 15, 2016

“In Christ Jesus neither circumcision availeth anything, nor uncircumcision, but a new creation.” (Galatians 6.15)

In the Name of the Father and of the Son and of the Holy Ghost. Amen.

“Look at the birds of the air,” Jesus said “for they do not sow neither do they reap, nor gather into barns; yet your heavenly Father feeds them”. The truth of our Lord’s words in this morning’s Gospel is found in the actual activities of the birds. For example, take the black capped chickadee: it was created with the instincts to hide seeds and other bits of food to eat later. Each tiny scrap is placed in a different spot and the chickadee can remember thousands of hiding places.

Furthermore, in addition to their food-gathering instincts, chickadees have a communication system that is quite complex and language-like. They pass on information regarding the identity of other flocks, and they have a special code to warn of predators. So, the more *dee* notes in a *chickadee-dee-dee* call, the higher the threat level.

Jesus points us to the birds and to the beauty of the flowers this morning to teach us about God’s faithfulness. These simple, little things testify to our Heavenly Father’s goodness. It is so easy for us to miss them in all of our busyness and worrying. But there they are – year in and year out –in all kinds of temperatures and weather conditions. Without speaking a word, they remind us to seek the kingdom of God and His righteousness first and above all things; and not to be anxious about tomorrow.

Unfortunately, we are easily distracted with other things, and quickly moved to doubt the Lord. “Mammon” causes great struggles for us. Mammon refers to the material things the devil uses to tempt us. It is rooted in envy. We see things that are attractive and interesting and we want them. We hear how they will save us time or effort and we want them. In fact, we begin to want these things so much that we honestly believe that we cannot be happy without them. And, once we get it we spend more time, and put more trust and confidence in that thing than we do in the Lord. And so Jesus said, “You cannot serve God and Mammon”.

The thing is, we cannot draw close to God if our affections are with other things. And, as long as we keep the Lord at arms' length, we will not experience the joy of really trusting Him, leaning on Him and depending on Him. Jesus calls us to believe and to live differently. He invites us to follow Him in the heavenly Way – in the new life. But this new life is NOT the same as the old life. It is all about faith rather than worry or fear; it is all about the will of God rather than my comfort and control. And that's where Jesus' point about the birds and the flowers comes in: "If God so clothe the grass of the field, which to-day is, and tomorrow is cast into the oven; shall He not much more clothe you, O ye of little faith?"

Over the past two weeks the Gospel has set God's grace and care before us. The parable of the Good Samaritan and the healing of the ten lepers – these are straight-forward illustrations of our Heavenly Father's providing. We need not be afraid. He has stooped down in the Person of His only-begotten Son and suffered and died for us. Jesus took upon Himself the burden of our sins, and by His precious Blood we are healed. Forty days after He rose from the dead, Jesus ascended into Heaven and sent the Holy Spirit. The Spirit is our Counsellor and Comforter as we follow Christ in the new life.

But what exactly does that mean? What does it mean to say that the Holy Spirit is our Counsellor as we follow the Lord Jesus Christ in the new life? St. Paul helps us to understand in this morning's Epistle. He says, "Far be it from me to boast except in the Cross of our Lord Jesus Christ, by which the world has been crucified to me, and I to the world." St. Paul speaks of crucifixion – of dying to the way of the world in order to truly appreciate and love the Way of the Cross. But we cannot do this on our own. We need God's help. We need the Holy Spirit to shine the Light of Christ in our hearts and dispel the darkness of Mammon and the world. We need the Spirit to show us what is true and good and holy, and to prompt us and lead us in this new Way of sacrificial Love.

What we need is to be changed – our hearts need to be converted from the way of the world to the way of Christ. If we really want to become the new creation St. Paul talks about, we cannot serve God and Mammon.

In her Revelations of Divine Love, the 14<sup>th</sup> century English mystic, Julian of Norwich, wrote about a light-bulb moment she was given. Holding a little hazel nut, she began to look at it in a new way. “I looked upon it with the eye of my understanding, and thought, ‘What may this be?’ And the answer came, ‘It is all that is made.’ I marveled how it might last, for I thought it might suddenly have fallen to nothing being so little. And I was answered: ‘It lasts and ever shall, for God loves it. And so have all things their beginning by the love of God’ ....In this little thing I saw three properties. The first is that God made it. The second that God loves it. And the third, that God keeps it.”

“Seek ye first the kingdom of God and His righteousness,” Jesus tells us, and everything else will be supplied.

And now unto God Almighty: the Father, the Son and the Holy Ghost...