

The Rev. Joan M. Kilian

Trinity Episcopal Church

Deuteronomy 30:15 – 20
1 Corinthians 3: 1 – 9

Psalm 119: 1 – 8
Matthew 5: 21 – 37

(Follow-on to Loretta's Stewardship talk)

Is our life as Christians, is our life together as the Church, the Body of Christ, about following a bunch of rules, or about understanding what the 'rules' help foster? Taken altogether, today's lessons sound like a compendium of rules – or commandments, or decrees or ordinances – on how to behave. But the heart of the message in all the readings is: choose life. Choose a life well lived, that is, a life lived in unity with God. A life of walking humbly with God and with our neighbor, whoever that might be.

In Matthew, Jesus reminds us that we don't just fulfill the letter of the law to get a check in the block. Rather, Jesus says, it is what is in our hearts that matters every bit as much as what we do. Jesus shows us that the law is not a law in the governmental sense, but rather a way, a design, a blueprint, for becoming 'fully, genuinely, gloriously human,' as Bishop NT Wright says. In other words, it's about transformation of life: transformation of our individual lives, of our corporate life together as the church, and ultimately, of this world.

Loretta was just speaking about Stewardship, to which some of you were probably thinking, "What?? We do that in the Fall, why are we talking about that again??" Well, because stewardship is about so much more than money. It's about being good stewards of:

- Our selves – our time, our physical/spiritual/emotional health, the gifts which God has planted and nurtured within each of us
- Creation – this fragile earth, our island home (Leeann & Chandra – the gift of water)
- The Church – in a physical sense with this building and the property, but also with our faith and our traditions and the hope that is within us
- All of the 'stuff' in our lives with which we've been blessed – finances yes, but also all the physical stuff and how we plan to dispose of it when we are no longer here
- One another, our neighbors, whoever they may be

Being a good steward of all these things (and probably more) is what following the law is about; it's part of the journey toward becoming 'fully, genuinely, gloriously human.' It isn't a part-time idea that we relegate to 4 or 5 weeks every year. It's a perspective on all of life and how we live it.

Stewardship is about developing a mindfulness of the gifts with which God continually blesses us, responding with an 'attitude of gratitude' and then helping to transform this world into the Kingdom of Heaven, God's household, God's economy. So, in thinking about us – Trinity – and our stewardship for just a few minutes:

- What do we (Trinity) do that Jesus would both recognize and love?
- What do we provide for people (you)?
- What is a cause that you believe in that you feel this church helps to advance?
- How has one life been changed because of what we, who are Trinity, do?

Let us pray. *Almighty God, whose loving hand has given us all that we possess: Grant us grace that we may honor you with our substance, and, remembering the account which we must one day give, may be faithful stewards of your bounty, through Jesus Christ our Lord. Amen. +*