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St. Paul's Lutheran Church  
2100 16<sup>th</sup> Street SW  
Austin, MN 55912-1749  
Pastor Ted Barthels  
Sermon preached on  
February 10, 2016  
Ash Wednesday

Passion Lesson: Preparation of Passover Lamb; Psalm 32  
Hymns: 140; 159; 175; 558

Grace be unto you and peace from God our Father and our Lord  
and Savior Jesus Christ. Amen.

Sermon Text: Luke 12:15

“And He said to them, ‘Take heed and beware of covetousness, for  
one’s life does not consist in the abundance of the things he  
possesses.’” (NKJV)

This is the Word of God.

Sanctify us, oh Lord, through Your truth. Your Word is truth.  
Amen.

In Christ Jesus, God my Savior, dear fellow Redeemed:

INTRO: *Object Lessons from Jesus' Passion* –

Our midweek meditations this Lenten season are going to focus on  
different objects that appeared in Jesus' passion, using them as a  
hook, a reminder of what was going on in the passion, and how  
these events relate to us in our daily lives. It is important for us not  
only to read through the passion history as the history lesson it is,  
and one that is accurate and true as well, but that we learn the  
lessons the history of our Lord's Passion contains for our lives.

Hopefully in some of these object lessons we will learn not to  
repeat the mistakes of others in their lives, while in others we pray  
that we might learn how to build a true life of faith and  
discipleship, honoring Him who gave His life for us.

So this Ash Wednesday evening let us begin with our first object lesson:

**THEME: The Coins and the Dice: A Lesson on Covetousness.**

**I. Pay attention to the danger of covetousness.**

Judas' covetousness cost him dearly. Judas lust for money was an ongoing problem. He had been chosen to be a sort of treasurer for Jesus and the disciples. Perhaps the disciples themselves handed over some of their own funds to their trusted friend so that he could go to the market and purchase needed supplies for all of them. We are told that some women assisted in the support of Jesus and His disciples. Some of these women were the wives of men of some substance. It is likely that some of the money which was entrusted to Judas came from these women. Others may also have given Jesus and the disciples' money from time to time to help supply for the necessities of life. The problem was that Judas had a secret lust, a love for money, and He became a thief. He pilfered some of the money entrusted to him.

It was Judas that was outraged when Mary of Bethany anointed Jesus at the dinner held at the home of their friend Simon the leper, who also must have been a beneficiary of Jesus' healing power. When Jesus' head and feet were anointed with this precious ointment all Judas saw was money being poured out on the ground and wasted, money which he could have pilfered for his own gain. He didn't see an act of faith in which a devoted disciple anointed Jesus in preparation for His burial. Judas couldn't make that connection because he was blinded by his overwhelming love of money. In his frustration over that loss, Judas sought out the enemies of our Lord and struck the deal that would ultimately doom him to hell. They made a deal and, just as was prophesied by Jeremiah, they counted out the 30 silver coins, coins that Judas initially cherished so dearly. Later he would find they brought him only despair.

Paul's words to Timothy states Judas' plight perfectly.

**1 Timothy 6:9-11** “But those who desire to be rich fall into temptation and a snare, and *into* many foolish and harmful lusts which drown men in destruction and perdition. <sup>10</sup>For the love of money is a root of all *kinds of* evil, for which some have strayed from the faith in their greediness, and pierced themselves through with many sorrows.

But we have another object lesson in the passion that comes from a different place. It is the lesson we learn from the dice. It is most likely that the soldiers at the foot of the cross didn't actually have dice at their disposal, but the gambling for the undergarment happened just the same. The tunic of the Lord which had been woven from top to bottom without seam made it a prize they all desired. There was small reward for their distasteful duty of sitting at the feet of the cross guarding these condemned criminals. Their thoughts were directed down toward the mundane things of this earth. After all it was just a man's clothing, and used clothing at that! And yet that was what they dwelt on. That garment was what they coveted. It was a game a chance, a casting of lots that was to determine who would take home the prize!

So the object lesson lies before us. What value is to be seen or sought after as we look at the history of the Lord's passion? The material wealth of this world draws our attention, indeed it is one of the most pernicious of sins to covet after the things of this world, to be disgruntled with one's own material blessings. Recently we saw on the news the lines of people eagerly laying down their money hoping against hope that they might win the billion dollar prize! The prize was so large that people couldn't seem to ignore it. The reporters assumed that everyone had to play! After all it could be life changing! Indeed it would be life changing, but life changing isn't always for the better.

Judas' lust for money was life changing. It brought his ruin. He lost his best and dearest friend, the one friend we cannot live without! It wasn't that Jesus didn't reach out to Judas. He did again and again. He even called him “friend!” It was the Lord's desire that Judas turn away from his lust for money and save his soul. But that was not to be, in the end Judas threw the money back to the priests, and in despair of forgiveness, he hanged himself!

And yes, the Roman soldiers sitting at the foot of the cross, they could have possessed something much more than a few items of clothing taken from the condemned. They were so absorbed with the material that they missed seeing and taking hold by faith of the higher treasure of eternal life that was there for them in Jesus. The dying thief saw it! He turned to Jesus!

What about us. We learn from the soldiers that it doesn't have to be a billion dollars to lead us into covetousness, Are we so busy striving for a few baubles that will not last that we neglect to see the treasure, or strive for the treasure that is there for us in Christ?

Let us recall what it is that Jesus taught us in the words of our text.

**II. One's life consists of something far more precious than earthly possessions.**

Life does not consist of the abundance of things that we possess! How easy it is to forget that truth.

So let us meditate upon the Lord's passion seeking that treasure which is from above. True life consists of spiritual treasures, the spiritual treasures that come to us because of Jesus. Jesus humbled Himself. He had it all the riches, the glory the majesty of heaven. Yet He set all that aside to secure a heavenly treasure for us. Paul wrote these familiar words

**2 Corinthians 8:9** "For you know the grace of our Lord Jesus Christ, that though He was rich, yet for your sakes He became poor, that you through His poverty might become rich."

Yes, in the end He gave all, even the clothes off His back, more than that, even His life's blood, the holy divine blood of the incarnate Son of God, to secure that treasure for us.

This evening we are privileged to partake of that sacrifice in the Blessed Sacrament that assures us that our sins are forgiven, we have hope and life in Him. This is our treasure. This is our life! May we pursue this treasure all the days of our lives.

**AMEN.**

And the peace of God which passes all understanding shall keep your hearts and minds in Christ Jesus. Amen.