

## Living here and now

*Pentecost 21C—October 9, 2016*

*[This transcript was meant for a spoken performance. It is not optimized for a reading experience.]*

*Money makes the world go around  
...the world go around  
...the world go around.*

*—Cabaret*

Some of you visiting this morning might be wondering, “what kind of church is this that shows Lisa Minnelli and Joel Grey singing ‘Money’ from Cabaret?”

Ask this of yourself.

How often do you think of money?

How often does your attention go to:

- what you have,
- what you don’t have,
- what you should have?

How many of you this morning ever think, “oh, I have too much money.” If that is you, if you think you have too much money, I want you to put your hand way up—heck I want you to stand up on your pew and wave your hand frantically so I know who you are. I want to talk to you after the service about some of the work we do here.

Notice that no one took me up on the offer.

There is some truth, there is a lot of truth to those lyrics from way back in 1972. We live in a world—wait, let me correct that—we live in a culture and society that values, not just money, but also acquisitions and assets.

The more you have, the better off you will be. At least that is a dominant message we hear.

I usually don’t pay attention to the financial section of the newspapers that I read. Did you know that when you retire it is advised that you have half a million dollars in money? That is why I don’t read the financial advisors. OK, I looked it up again. One bank, CIBC, said that I would be good with \$200,000. I don’t have 200 thousand.

But I am good to retire. I have enough money to retire at 65. Yup, I am set... I have enough money to retire and live comfortably for a day and a half, two days if I stretch the money. Survival after that depends on acquiring enough recipes for cat food and crackers.

All joking aside, I don't have what the banks are saying that I need to have in order to retire. I don't have any family that will leave me a comfortable inheritance. They are dead and they didn't. I don't come from a family of money or assets.

Surely, I am not the only one this morning that feels the pangs of fear of not having enough.

We come from a culture that celebrates wealth. How many of you know what happened to Kim Kardashian this week? She was robbed in Paris. The robbers stole 10 million dollars of her jewelry.

How much is Donald Trump worth?

How much income tax did he pay in 1995? The fact that you might even know who I am referencing is an indication that we come from a culture and society that honours, celebrates and reveres money, wealth and possessions.

I can easily become distracted with the fear of not having enough in the future.

Remember: whatever is in the future is fantasy. *Whatever is in the future is fantasy.* Whatever is in the past is also fantasy. What is real is what we experience in the here and now of our lives.

Let that sink in a bit further. Only in the here and now can we experience life. In the here and now we are engaged, present and prepared for what is next. *"Live frugally, spend your money sensibly, don't cheat yourself out of things you need while you're raising a family, and get out of debt fast,"* one financial advisor says. *"If you do all that, you'll be just fine."*

I can get carried away in fantasy. When I am frustrated, when I am fearful about not having enough, my fantasy drifts backwards and forwards to the "what ifs".

What if I had done this, done that? What if I had chosen another career path? What if I had chosen other life choices? I had two children when I was just 22 and 23. Maybe I might have had more money.

I am too old for a sugar daddy. I am not available for a sugar mama... wait, how much do they have?

Yes, I would be richer if I had chosen different paths. Way back, 51 years ago, I chose a path, an ancient path called Christianity. I chose to listen and to follow the one called Jesus. I chose to engage, study, be disciplined in the ways of this movement of following the ancient sacred teachings.

Yes, I might have been richer and I chose a different way.

A way that we hear—if we listen.

A way that we experience—if we participate.

I have always known that this way is a path of love. This way is about relationship. This way is about caring about one another. This way is about respecting and honouring all that is beneath our feet, surrounds our body and fills us with sound, taste and sensation.

Sometimes, many times, I forget. Fear will do that to you. Fear will make you forget the path that you are walking.

The storyteller we call Luke is writing to their community in the late first century. Today is the story of the 10 people with skin ailments. 10 lepers is the common reference to today's gospel.

You might know this story. It often comes up this Sunday in the calendar as we observe Thanksgiving.

Some of you might know this story as a teaching of good manners versus bad manners. 10 are healed. Jesus says, "Go and show yourself to the priests." Go to the temple and show them that you are healed. 10 go trotting off. If this were a true story, you could imagine that those 10 were ecstatic.

I want to shift your perspective or at least offer a different lens to this story. I want you to not look at this story as a judgement of good and bad. Think of this as a story, a teaching, of experiencing life in another way. To follow this one called Jesus is a call to experience your life, your life right now in a different way.

Luke is teaching about the different path. When Luke has Jesus saying to the ten healed to go and show themselves to the temple, that was the expected custom of the time of Jesus.

Jewish life was temple-centric. There is not anything unusual to be told to go and show yourself to the temple priests. That was the expectations. That was the culture, customs and social world that Jesus would have been born into.

The ten went running off. They went running towards Jerusalem. One turned back.

One turned back;

one broke with the pack.

One defied;

that one defied the cultural expectations.

You could only be declared acceptable and successful if you did what was expected of you. In today's story, that would have been to go to the temple.

There is no good and bad. There is a shift. One turns back. One chooses a different path. One chooses to not seek society's approval... that one doesn't go to the temple. That is not part of that one's story.

As I have sat with this gospel this week, I am reminded. I remember why I turned and chose a different path. That sacred path. This sacred path called Christianity.

To be Christian is to be called to follow a different way.

The way is a teaching that there *is* enough. This way is a reminder that we live in a bountiful world where there is enough if we care. There is enough for you. There is enough for me.

For as long as I can remember, I have been on this path. It's not an easy path. The attraction of the one percent is incredibly seductive.

The theme that money makes the world go around is all around us here in this city. Rich or poor, one per cent or ninety-nine percent, we are pulled into the idea of scarcity, the idea that there is not enough.

Today we welcome a new family, a new baby onto this path of a different way.

As she is baptized and received, you here today will rise up and be ready, willing and able to stand beside her family. By your example, show her.

Show her an economy of love, not hate. Show her an economy of shared abundance, not scarcity.

Create for her a world that honours, protects and cares for what is beneath her feet, surrounds her body, fills her mind and her spirit.

Luke describes that one of the healed turned back. That one came back and said thank you.

Jesus replies, *"Rise up. Your faith, your path, the path that you have chosen will save you."*

And this, for us, for Isabelle, is good news indeed.

Happy Thanksgiving.