

**The Reverend Marjo Anderson**

**Narrative Lectionary 1.22**  
**Matthew 6.9-17, 19-21, 24-34**

**3 February 2019**  
**Salem, Bridgeport**

**“Secret Treasure”**

*<sup>21</sup> For where your treasure is, there will your heart be as well....*

Where is your treasure? Or more specifically, what is your treasure?  
If I were to give you 3 wishes – 2 for yourself and 1 for Salem –  
(and you couldn't ask for more wishes!) for what would you ask?  
Seriously, take a minute and write down the 2 things you would ask for yourself –  
and the 1 thing you would ask for Salem.

Now I don't know what you wrote, but I know that I struggled with the things for myself.  
Everything I tried writing I had second thoughts about, as I recalled all the fairy tales about foolish wishes  
and heard that word of warning in my mind: “Be careful what you pray for – you just might get it!”  
My prayer for Salem was easier: May your will be done in and through us, God.

I think if Jesus were sitting here today with a pencil and paper in hand,  
he would answer the question about his wishes in pretty much the same words he used in our gospel today.

What does Jesus want? He tells us in the Lord's Prayer.  
It's been pointed out that Jesus was actually modeling his prayer on the 10 commandments:  
The first commandment, “I am the Lord your God. You shall have no other gods before me”  
is reflected in Jesus' opening address, “Our Abba/Daddy/Papa in heaven”.  
In Jewish tradition one wasn't even supposed to use the name of God,  
yet here Jesus makes a radical break with tradition,  
not by calling God by the formal Greek title, “Father”,  
but by using the informal Aramaic equivalent of “Daddy” or “Papa”.  
In doing that Jesus was making it clear that while God was the transcendent power in heaven,  
God was also the immanent force of love here on earth.  
And should anyone get the idea that Jesus was breaking the second commandment here,  
“You shall not take the name of the Lord your God in vain”, he makes it clear that he is not  
by following his use of the word Abba with “Hallowed be your name”.  
The third commandment, “Remember the Sabbath and keep it holy”  
is reflected in Jesus' words, “May your reign come; may your will be done on earth as it is in heaven”  
because the entire purpose of the Sabbath is to allow people time each week  
to rest and renew their relationship with God, undistracted by work and other earthly concerns.  
The rest of the commandments govern our relationships with each other,  
keeping us from coveting and stealing and destroying possessions and relationships and lives,  
and Jesus covers these by reminding us to turn to God for daily bread, for all that we need  
instead of taking what we need from others,  
and when we do act in ways that hurt each other, that we absolutely need to forgive one another 100%.  
The Lord's Prayer is Jesus' call for us to return to God's original commandments,  
simplified by the 2 greatest commandments:  
Love the Lord your God with all your heart and soul and mind and strength; and  
Love your neighbor as yourself.

In other words, if we were really smart, the 2 wishes we would ask for ourselves,  
the 2 safest prayers we could pray would be:  
“May I love God with my whole being” and “May I love others as myself”.

Did any of you put those down as your 2 wishes? Would any of you now?  
I admit that as much as I know those are the right answers, I hesitate to write them down.  
And I hesitate because I know that even though they may bring joy in the long-term,  
I'm afraid of the short-term cost.

The Bible is full of stories of people who had that kind of faith, but I'm not sure I'm up to their level.  
God came to Abraham when he was 75 and asked him to pack up everything he owned  
and set out for somewhere God would show him. How many of us would do that?  
Later God came to Abraham and asked him to sacrifice his son, Isaac? How many of us would do that?  
God came to Moses who was a fugitive for having killed an Egyptian  
and asked him to go ask Pharaoh to let the entire Hebrew slave population go. How many of us would do that?  
God came to a young girl and asked her to become an unwed mother which could get her stoned for adultery.  
How many of us would do that?  
God came to Jesus and asked him to allow himself to be put to death on a cross.  
How many of us would do that?  
To be honest, I'm afraid of what God might ask of me.

And yet, because Abraham trusted and did what God asked, he became the father of many nations,  
the patriarch of Judaism, Christianity, and Islam.  
Because Moses trusted and did what God asked,  
God led the people out of slavery into the freedom of the promised land.  
Because Mary trusted and did what God asked, Jesus, Immanuel, God-with-us, our Lord & Savior was born.  
Because Jesus trusted and did what God asked, God raised Jesus from the dead.

But even knowing how those stories turned out, it's still scary to submit our wills to God.  
Which is why I think Jesus ended his prayer with these words: "Save us from the time of trial and deliver us from evil".

What the Bible teaches is that the secret of life is to Love God above all else,  
and to do that it means we have to submit our will to God's.  
And even for Jesus it wasn't easy.  
As he prayed that night in the garden of Gethsemane,  
he prayed that the cup of suffering and death might be taken from him.  
He was honest with God and said exactly what he wanted.  
But in the end he followed his desires with this one: "Nevertheless, not my will, but yours be done".  
You and I need to do the same.

Those wishes we wrote down?  
God knew those wishes before we wrote them and God knows every other desire of our hearts as well.  
And God will ultimately provide, if not for all our wants, then at least for all our needs.  
But God isn't a dispensing machine.  
God is our heavenly Parent who gave us life  
and who wants nothing more than to be in a loving relationship with us.

What we need to do with the wishes we wrote down is to give them over to God and say,  
God, you know what I want. And even more, you know what's best for me.  
Help me to understand that life is not all about me, but about you and other people.  
Help me to love you with my whole being. Help me love even my enemy as myself.  
Give me the courage to say, "Not my will, but yours be done".  
And give me the faith and trust and hope to believe in your never-failing love.

When we do that, when we submit our own will's to God's, when we put what God wants over and above what we want,  
it's then that we will discover that the treasure we sought is nothing compared to the treasure God has in mind for us.  
It's then that we will discover that it's when we give control over to God that miracles can happen.  
And it's then that we will discover the peace, the love, and the joy of living.  
Take your wishes – hand them over to God – and then ask God to do what God wants.  
And I promise you, that no matter how rough the journey, the end will be worth it.  
Because at the end of the journey we will find the treasure that is beyond anything we can ask or imagine –  
the treasure of abundant life, abundant love, and abundant joy. **Amen**