

# Stretching Toward Sunday

Thoughts, readings and reflections  
based on this week's lectionary readings

August 11, 2019

Proper 14C / Ordinary 19C / Pentecost +9

## The readings this week:

- Isaiah 1:1, 10-20 ◦ Psalm 50:1-8, 22-23
- Hebrews 11:1-3, 8-16 ◦ Luke 12:32-40

[Click here to read this week's Scriptures](#)

## Strangers and Foreigners

When I was about eight, my father decided that our family would take a wilderness vacation. By wilderness, I'm talking tent camping at a state park. He bought a big brand-spanking new tent and all the necessary accoutrements. We were ready! Off we drove, like sojourners to a strange and foreign land. I was both excited and terrified about the adventure. What if there were bears? What if I got poison ivy? What if I had to walk to the bath house in the middle of the night? What would several days without the comforts of home be like?

It was great fun at first, although the tent was much more difficult to assemble than anticipated and ended up being pitched on a bit of a slope. After hot dogs, marshmallows, hot chocolate, and listening to the night noises, it was finally time to sleep—in the tent, in this strangely wonderful “wilderness.”

Fast forward a few hours to lightning cracking, thunder rumbling, and the onset of a summer deluge. By morning's light the fun wore off when we realized our tent was pitched in prime run-off area for the flash flooding and was retaining a couple of inches of water. It rained all day long, leaving us thoroughly damp, both in body and spirit. My father, having not lived up to his Daniel Boone ambitions, initiated a hasty and soggy breaking of camp and silent drive back to civilization. So ended our first and last family tent camping experience. The tent and all related equipment were sold posthaste, and our standard vacation lodging reverted to the familiar and dependable comfort of Howard Johnson and Holiday Inn.

Something about that tent camping experience stuck with me, however, and I developed a liking for sojourns and adventure. I grew to appreciate a more transitory lifestyle, which was helpful since I have lived in 25 different homes in 55 years. Moving about, shedding possessions along the way, nurturing an affinity for time on the trail and in the woods have helped to both nurture my faith and give me an appreciation for this week's Revised Common Lectionary readings.

It is an act of faith to look at life as a journey, a passage, and not an end-game. It is a blessing to learn

to hold loosely to possessions and rely on the abundance and goodness of God, to trust that there is enough and then some. It is God's command to live fearlessly in a fear-filled, anxiety-ridden world, and we can do so only by faith. We are foreigners in a strange land, be it city-slicker tent campers in a state park or

It is a blessing to learn to hold loosely to possessions and rely on the abundance and goodness of God, to trust that there is enough and then some.

immigrants seeking a better life in a new country or refugees from war-torn lands seeking safety and hope. Life takes a great amount of faith to live well, to live fearlessly, and to live in the moment knowing that there is indeed something better around over the horizon and beyond our human grasp. These are important words and truth for our present age.

Everything in this world is transitory, a part of a larger whole, a dot on the map of eternity, but happy are those who put their faith in God, who are ready to pack their tents and journey on to the final destination God prepares.

~ Rev. Sharron R Blezard, [Stewardship of Life](#)



# Reflecting on the Word



## 1st Reading: [Isaiah 1:1, 10-20](#)

Isa 1:10-17 describes their worship via the sacrificial system (as given to them by Moses). What is the Lord's response to their worship? What is it that the Lord really wants from them? Do you think this expectation is relevant to Christians today? Why/Why not? Starting in Isaiah 1:18, the LORD reasons with them, what does he offer them? What are the consequences of their choice? Is God willing to reason it all out with someone who has trouble understanding His Ways? What does that mean in our culture today? [Heathcote Engadine Anglican Church, Angelfire.com](#)

## Psalm Reading: [Psalm 50:1-8, 22-23](#)

When have you gotten caught up in the things you do for God to the extent that you neglected worshipping him? How is God described in verses 1-6? What evil deeds have the wicked done? How would "thank offerings" help them to understand salvation? What would a "thank offering" to God look like for you? Jot down a few emotions one might experience when being accused of having a fake faith that once was real. What price has God asked you to pay for real faith? *Quiet Time Bible Study, InterVarsity Press, [Walking Women through the Word](#)*



What IS the treasure? Where is my heart's desire found? The unfailing treasure is eternal and found in the present moment. But because of the layers of misplaced values accumulated through life, finding the treasure may require a kind of quest. But ultimately the treasure is found within our very selves. There's the insight to take back into the world. And the world? Throughout scripture, God's heart is with the anawim, 'the little ones' who seek God for deliverance; the poor, the widows, the orphans, the disenfranchised, the marginalized, the sick, the stranger, the maimed. Jesus also embraced these as the bearers of the kingdom, and the church's treasure, too, is found among the poor. And so, find the treasure within and know the treasure manifested in others.

Some of us may have to change our idea of treasure. Carlo Carretto discovered early in life that "if I want to be happy on earth I must fall madly in love with God and the things of God."

May you find and know your true treasure!

~ Suzanne Guthrie, [At the Edge of Enclosure](#)

## 3rd Reading: [Hebrews 11:1-3, 8-16](#)

How would you describe faith to a non-believer? What do you think of the writer's definition of faith in verse 1 and why? In what ways does faith in God change the way we see the world according to this passage? In what ways do each of the characters in this passage exhibit this kind of active faith? Why do you think faith and action are so intricately tied up together? Why do you think the writer of Hebrews says it requires faith to please God? What does faith allow us to see, or what does it allow us to look beyond? The old saying says, "seeing is believing." If seeing is not the root of faith, how might we revise that saying? In what ways does this kind of faith make us "strangers and foreigners on the earth?" [Faith Element](#)

## 4th Reading: [Luke 12:32-40](#)

In the Gospel, Jesus says to "be like servants who await their master's return from a wedding, ready to open immediately when he comes and knocks" The servants are watching for the master. Do you "watch" for God in your everyday life? Where do you find him? When you look for what Jesus calls the "inexhaustible treasure," he suggests: "Sell your belongings and give alms ... for where your treasure is, there also will your heart be." Pope Francis, speaking to the youth in the Philippines, tells them to "become beggars," so they might learn to receive. If they (we) are evangelized by the poor, what "inexhaustible treasure" will we receive from them? [Saint Louis University Sunday Website](#)

## Praying Toward Sunday

Faith in the Ordinary

It takes little faith to see the sacred in the extraordinary.

To have faith the sacred is in the ordinary, though, takes courage to believe the mundane can be enough; that grace can emerge even through the dull, the slightly disappointing, the not quite right, not quite as we intended, not really what we hoped; the clumsy, the awkward, and the imperfect.

Let your act of faith be to let what you do be enough.  
Let what you do be enough...

~ Cheryl Lawrie, [\[hold this space\]](#)