

Investing Wisely 12 Pentecost A

I hear in our first lesson today, God's invitation in Isaiah to be refreshed in body and soul:

"Thus says the Lord:

"Ho, everyone who thirsts,
come to the waters;
and you that have no money,
come, buy and eat!

Come, buy wine and milk
without money and without price."

In a recession, that sounds like a good deal to me. My body and soul could use a stop at both God's watering hole and God's banquet.

The church is the place where God offers the water and rich food. The water and rich food are the words of life that we teach, we preach and we live out through our ministries. What we possess is something no other organization has. Have we come to God's invitation? Have we bought and eaten what God has to offer?

I am using God's invitation to banquet with Him to take time to reevaluate my priorities and keep a balance in my life. My biggest priority here at Trinity is the development of leaders. We will soon find that Fall is approaching and we will need new teachers for children and adult formation classes. At the end of the year it will be time for new leadership on vestry and we will have four persons finishing their terms and one current vacancy. Trinity needs help. My challenge: where will I and the vestry find new leaders?

I admit that I don't always spend enough of my time reading books that need to get read. Those are the books involving the development of leaders here at Trinity. The books are a part of Church Development Institute in which a vestry member and I have been students learning about the church as an organization, how it behaves and what can make the church flourish. This week you will be investing money in sending me to a course entitled, Mediation Skills Training Institute, where clergy and other church leaders learn how to help their parishes use and manage conflict in a healthy way that produces growth. In October this year, your vestry and I will be inviting you and the entire religious community of Janesville to attend

workshops on these topics in Ortmayer Hall. What a wonderful outreach that will be for those who could be helped to learn more about the family in conflict and how they can work toward reconciliation and healthy solutions.

That does not leave a lot of time for much else given that the priest's primary responsibility is to lead worship. When I refer to worship I also include the occasional wedding and burial services. There are four regular worship services that happen at Trinity weekly including Mercy Manor on the fifth floor of Mercy Hospital. There will also be a fifth service on Tuesday that I will mention later.

The Formation questionnaires that were given you in Eastertide said that you wanted me to be involved more in teaching. So the Sermon Talk Back sharing has started after the second service. Also, coming this Fall on Tuesday evenings, a 20 week series will begin on the Religions of the World. Again, more reading takes place to prepare for this. Fortunately, I have a volunteer to be my research assistant or those classes would not be happening. Additionally, James Morrison and I are working on an evening worship service that would lead into the Religions of the World class.

That is what is going on in my ministry among you. It's nonstop but it's what I dream about for all of us at Trinity. Also, I am hoping with God's help and a few of our parents with children still at home, to have a social gathering just for these families so they can get to know each other. There are at least 20 such families that can be a nucleus for ministry growth in this church. We have neglected our ministry to parents and they need to know that their church cares enough to try to get them together and hear what their thoughts are as they meet the challenges of raising children in a complex society and how Trinity can best help them as dads and moms. These families also need to know that parents that are largely focused on children at home do have a faith ministry to share in their community. I sent out an email to get parents to come together on a Saturday in September so let me know what Saturday works best. The church will provide childcare.

Now let me ask all of you, "What is going on in your ministry both here at Trinity and elsewhere?" We want to know so we can rejoice with you, celebrate your gifts and unite others with you that have a similar ministry. I invite you to refresh us by writing about the ministry in which you find yourselves currently engaged in the monthly newsletter, The Trinity Messenger. That inspires and

encourages all of us. It builds community especially when at any time of the year at least 30% of us are on vacation, ministering to grandchildren, visiting children and other family members or taking at home children to other events.

We are involved in many helping organizations and churches during the year and when wintering in the South. Some of us have gone back to school and it would be grand to read of your goals and successes. Did you know that the Lucille Wells Scholarship holders submit articles telling us how it's going with their courses? There are other good things going on in your lives through fellowship, hospitality, teaching, music, and pastoral care at Trinity and such community action as ECHO, GIFTS, Kiwanis, and United Way. Your lives are so full and it would be a blessing to share them with your faith community as you do with your own families.

I sometimes feel overwhelmed with the expectations I have put upon myself. I know that many of you are overwhelmed with how busy your lives are. But the same few people can not get the ministry done by themselves anymore. The ladies that used to help in the kitchen for lunches or fellowship are not living or available anymore. I know that not even Jesus could feed the 5000 without those who were willing to share what they had.

I know I can take comfort that I am not alone in my priesthood. God has given to all of us a call to be equipped for ministry together. However, how many of us are using their gifts here through Trinity? Once again God's invitation by the prophet Isaiah cautions and guides us as we invest our lives wisely:

“Why do you spend your money for that which is not bread,
and your labor for that which does not satisfy?
Listen carefully to me, and eat what is good,
and delight yourselves in rich food.
Incline your ear, and come to me;
listen, so that you may live.”

I can't spend a lot of time on every ministry in this church, but I can on a few focused ministries. Through you however, I can touch many more people than I could alone. Through you, we can accomplish so much and bring others to drink and eat the rich food of God's banquet. I believe the ministries we do are very satisfying. They are worth the investment. Can find time to put God in your schedule? We need new faces, new ideas, new energy to do it or it

won't happen at all. God help us to choose our life investments wisely. Amen