



## Treasure in Earthen Vessels: 15th Sunday after Pentecost

In the Name of the Father, and of the Son, and of the Holy Spirit, Amen. Christ is in our midst! He is and shall be!



In the Epistle reading this morning, St. Paul writes, “But we have this treasure in earthen vessels, that the excellence of the power may be of God and not of us. We are hard-pressed on every side, yet not crushed; we are perplexed, but not in despair; persecuted, but not forsaken; struck down, but not destroyed—always carrying about in the body the dying of the Lord Jesus, that the life of Jesus also may be manifested in our body. For we who live are always delivered to death for Jesus’ sake, that the life of Jesus also may be manifested in our mortal flesh.” St. Paul is writing to the Corinthian Church about their core, about their essence—“the light of the knowledge of the glory of God in the face of Jesus Christ.”

I know you hear it all the time, but we can’t repeat it enough—all we have, our only boast, our only source of life and strength, is Christ. This is the treasure that St. Paul means when he says, “we have this treasure in earthen vessels.” What we have to proclaim as Christians is mighty; this message is the salvation of the world, the healing of our infirmities, the kingdom of God in power. That God loves us, and He came to share in our life with us, and that all of the evil in the world has a source, and that source is defeated in the person of Jesus Christ. This is our treasure—a treasure we’re called not to hoard, but to proclaim to all the world.

But this treasure is not of our own making, we don’t possess it like a piece of land or a car. Rather we carry this “treasure in earthen vessels”—we not perfect, we’re not men and women that everyone looks at in astonishment because of something we are. We’re broken, we’re battered by the world like everyone else. St. Paul writes, “We are hard-pressed on every side, yet not crushed; we are perplexed, but not in despair; persecuted, but not forsaken; struck down, but not destroyed.” The wonder in our station is that the world doesn’t crush us, it doesn’t destroy us, because we have Christ. St. John Chrysostom comments, “earthen vessel is our mortal weakness, the glory is from God and beheld by grace not of us, [because] we are weak



and easily wounded—the things we hold are not of man.” And then he directs us to remember how God has frequently used the weak of the world to manifest His power (so there’s no confusing the grace of God with human might)—Moses was chosen to speak for God even though he had a speech impediment, the boy David killed the giant Goliath and saved the people of Israel from destruction, even the might of the worm in the book of the Prophet Jonah—bringing down the plant and bringing Jonah to despair, because of the normal activity of a simple worm.

As priests of body of Christ, which all members of the Church are called to be, we’re to carry this treasure to those who have eyes to see, and ears to hear. We don’t have to worry about who we may offend, who might not understand, what the reactions (anger, hurt, rejection, ridicule) might be. The light that shines in men’s heart is Christ, by the power of the Holy Spirit. Our job is not to convert the masses, but to show forth by our lives and by our teaching the treasure that is the Crucified and Risen Son of God, Jesus Christ. The Holy Spirit then will act the hearts of people, giving them the power to choose to take up this great treasure for themselves.

Our duty is to ensure that we live always this word from St. Paul, “For we who live are always delivered to death for Jesus’ sake, that the life of Jesus also may be manifested in our mortal flesh.” To deliver ourselves to death for Jesus’ sake means that we follow the way of the Cross, the way of Christ, at all times, in all places, in every situation. Dying to our own way and our will and our own desires, and giving our lives entirely over to God. So that it is no longer I who live, but Christ lives in me. By the power and the grace of God.



I'll end with a quote on this passage, again from St. John Chrysostom, reminding us of the power of the treasure that we hold within ourselves—the light of the glory of the face of Jesus Christ:

“Let us then be amazed at the Power of God, admire, adore it. Let us ask Jews, let us ask Greeks: who persuaded the whole world to desert from their fathers’ usages [beliefs], and to go over to another way of life? The fisherman, or the tentmaker? the publican, or the unlearned and ignorant? And how can these things stand with reason, except it were Divine Power which achieveth all by their means? And what too did they say to persuade them? ‘Be baptized in the Name of The Crucified.’ Of what kind of man? One they had not seen nor looked upon. But nevertheless saying and preaching these things, they persuaded them that they who gave them oracles, and whom they had received by tradition from their forefathers, [these] were no Gods: whilst this Christ, He Who was nailed [to the wood,] drew them all unto Himself... Whence then the persuasiveness of [their teachings and] sayings, tell me? From nothing else than the Power of God... it is manifest that it was the power of Christ every where that effected all, which every where shineth, and swifter than any lightning illumeth the hearts of men. All these things, then, considering, and accepting what hath been done as a clear proof of the promise of the things to come, worship with us the invincible might of The Crucified, that ye may both escape the intolerable punishments, and obtain the everlasting kingdom; of which may all we partake through the grace and love towards men of our Lord Jesus Christ; to Whom be glory [now and ever, and unto ages of ages]. Amen.”

Glory to Jesus Christ! Glory forever!



*Source: Blog [PRIESTMATTHEWJACKSON](#)*