

**Bible Study**  
**Proper 13, Year C**  
**July 31, 2016**

**[RCL] Hosea 11:1-11; Psalm 107:1-9, 43; Colossians 3:1-11; Luke 12:13-21**

**Hosea 11:1-11**

It is striking to see the emotional vulnerability and passion of God in this passage. Forget any notion of God as a distant, unaffected observer. God desires us with a powerful passion. Israel is the wayward son who continually breaks relationship with God, and God's heartache is almost palpable in today's passage from Hosea. It's as if God is saying, "Israel, you are my son that I lead out of the wilderness, and you keep wandering off to worship other gods. You are breaking my heart. But I will not give up. How can I forget my beloved child?"

God's words are just as true for us as they are for Israel. Are we not the children of God, who were brought of the wilderness through the waters of baptism? But sometimes we falter. We lose sight of whose we are and where we are headed as God's beloved children. Our wandering is the same as Israel's: being oblivious to the love of the God who pursues us with such abandon. But our hope is also the same as Israel's: trusting in the God who graciously pursues us rather than ourselves or anything else in whom we might be tempted to put our trust.

- How have you felt God pursuing relationship with you this week?
- How can you practice placing your trust in God?

**Psalm 107:1-9, 43**

I recently worked at a summer day camp where I helped small children get acquainted with the swimming pool. They ranged from five to eight years old, and many of these children had never been swimming before. Each child sat on the edge of the pool and waited for their turn to be carried through the water of the pool. What amazed me was the rapid progress some of these children were able to make in their comfort level in the water. Some of the children trusted me enough that they would allow themselves to be turned onto their backs to float. They believed I was trustworthy which enabled them to trust that they would be carried through the water.

The waters of our lives can be deep and downright frightening. But if we trust that God is good, we can allow ourselves to be carried, even in the roughest of waters.

- Do you believe that God is fundamentally good as the psalmist says?

**Colossians 3:1-11**

This section of Colossians is concerned with a radical reorientation of personal identity. Imagine you meet someone for the first time. You begin to introduce yourself, but instead of starting off with where you were born or what you do for a living, you tell them that you are a part of Christ. Your identity as a part of Christ is so fundamental that it becomes the primary factor in how you think of yourself. That's what the author of Colossians is describing when they write "you have died, and your life is hidden with Christ in God."

It is this identification with Christ that frames our lives. It is the basis for our ethical lives: we are in Christ and, as a part of him who is true and good, the only thing that makes sense is to shed all of the parts of our lives that do not reflect who he is.

- What does it mean to shed the parts of your lives that do not reflect Christ in us?

### **Luke 12:13-21**

“Take care! Be on your guard against all kinds of greed; for one's life does not consist in the abundance of possessions.” Jesus’s warning could not be more timely.

I recently heard a bishop say that the largest religion in America is consumerism. He asked us to pause and reflect on the fact that all of our national holidays: Christmas, Thanksgiving, Memorial Day, etc. are dedicated to shopping. Our national holidays are occasions to buy more things that we most likely do not need. And then we work more to get more money to buy more things we don’t really need. The cycle continues until we find ourselves robbed from actually living our lives, reduced to anticipating the next purchase.

But this isn’t life. Jesus’s warning is good news that invites us to actually live the life that God intends: a life of self-giving love in relationship with God, our neighbors, and creation.

- In what ways do you give into the need for an “abundance of possessions?”
- What is one way you can become “rich toward God?”

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