

Bruton Parish Church  
The Rev. Ronald P. Jaynes, Interim Rector  
Sunday, August 8, 2010  
Proper 14 (Year C)

Jesus observes: Where your treasure is, there will your heart be. Jesus wants us to contemplate what constitutes "treasure" for us. We have heard Jesus say: Do not worry about what you will eat or drink or wear ... the Father knows you need these things, and they will be given to you ...

And today we read: Do not be afraid, little flock, it is your Father's good pleasure to give you the kingdom ... then he asks us to do the most frightening thing: sell your possessions and give your money away to the poor. Not a passage taken literally by hardly anyone. Jesus talks about money and material possessions – stuff – more than he does about anything because there is nothing as powerful to seduce us away from the things that really matter. "Make purses that do not wear out, an unfailing treasure." That is the problem Jesus is addressing – we take material needs and give them so much of our energy that living into the kingdom of God is not seen as the real treasure.

"Where your treasure is, there will your heart be." Jesus is making the case that if our treasure is God's love, that is where our hearts will be ... and it is a treasure – beautiful and wondrous. There is a seemingly unending battle within us as to which "treasure" is the "treasure" we most desire.

Someone used the computer as a metaphor for this. We want a Christianity that is user-friendly, platform compatible add-on. Right up there with the other programs around which we live our lives. Jesus says Christianity is NOT an add-on – it is not one more icon on the desktop of our lives that we can click into from time to time. Rather, it is meant to be the operating system – and everything else either is or is not compatible with it.

We get glimpses of people living with Christ as the Operating System of their lives – we see it sometimes in our own lives and the lives of others around us – we have the lives of saints ... men and women who inspire us to keep trying. They had the same struggle – to keep God's kingdom as the operating principle of life ... their stories show us that sometimes it works.

For example, this week on our Episcopal Church calendar, is the commemoration of Jonathan Daniels, a seminarian at the Episcopal Theological Seminary in Cambridge at the same time I was a seminarian at Nashotah House. It was 1965. The civil rights movement was in full swing. Jonathan heard a televised appeal by the Rev. Martin Luther King, Jr. asking for workers to come to Selma, Alabama, to help in the work of securing the

right to vote for all citizens. When he went to Evensong that night and sang the song of Mary, he hath exalted the humble and meek, he knew he must go.

So that summer he went to Selma where he lived with the black families who were struggling to claim their right to vote. In August, Jonathan and several others were jailed for participating in a picket line. Released unexpectedly six days later, the freed civil rights workers walked to a small store where they had previously shopped. Ruby Sales, a black teenager, was the first to reach the door of the store. As Ruby approached, she was met by a man armed with a shotgun, who cursed her. Jonathan pulled her aside to shield her from the twelve-gauge shotgun and took a blast point-blank in the chest. He died on the spot.

The word of that death spread quickly around all of our seminaries, and we all grew up a lot that summer. "Take up your cross and follow me" took on a new and current meaning.

In his book *Brightest and Best*, meditations about the lives of the Saints of our Episcopal Calendar, Sam Portaro theorizes that the man who threatened Ruby Sales that day in August had been taught to fear and hate those who differed from him. He had been taught that to grant someone else, especially a black someone else, any entitlement is to, in some way, diminish one's own share. Jonathan Daniels, on the other hand, nourished by Scripture and the sacraments, encouraged by the sample of the saints, had learned faith, hope and love.

On the top step of that little store in Selma, Alabama, Portaro writes, "fear met faith, greed met hope, and hatred met love. The outcome could have been predicted."

For that moment, the Kingdom of God, the Love of Jesus, was the operating system of Jonathan Daniels' life. It was his treasure. The forces that pull us away from the Way of Jesus are strong at work. They come promising us the good life. But we know, or we would not be here this morning, that as an operating system, this world always lets us down. Jesus comes to show us a better operating system.

He calls it the Kingdom.

It lasts forever, and it is available to all.

Lord, I believe. Help my unbelief.