

Living Lent | Day 1, Ash Wednesday

Successful at Being Human

Jesus said, "Beware of practicing your piety before others in order to be seen by them; for then you have no reward from your Father in heaven. So whenever you give alms, do not sound a trumpet before you, as the hypocrites do in the synagogues and in the streets, so that they may be praised by others. Truly I tell you, they have received their reward. But when you give alms, do not let your left hand know what your right hand is doing, so that your alms may be done in secret; and your Father who sees in secret will reward you. And whenever you pray, do not be like the hypocrites; for they love to stand and pray in the synagogues and at the street corners, so that they may be seen by others. Truly I tell you, they have received their reward. But whenever you pray, go into your room and shut the door and pray to your Father who is in secret; and your Father who sees in secret will reward you. And whenever you fast, do not look dismal, like the hypocrites, for they disfigure their faces so as to show others that they are fasting. Truly I tell you, they have received their reward. But when you fast, put oil on your head and wash your face, so that your fasting may be seen not by others but by your Father who is in secret; and your Father who sees in secret will reward you. Do not store up for yourselves treasures on earth, where moth and rust consume and where thieves break in and steal; but store up for yourselves treasures in heaven, where neither moth nor rust consumes and where thieves do not break in and steal. For where your treasure is, there your heart will be also."

Matthew 6:1-6,16-21 RSV

Encouragement for the Lenten Journey:

I read a story about an average middle-class businessman who died and went to heaven. As he entered his heavenly neighborhood, he noticed a pretty house with beautiful landscaping and inquired about the resident. "Oh," said Jesus, "That house belongs to a contractor who built custom homes for great

people but he never forgot the less fortunate. He also built free homes for people in need.” They continued to walk and the next house was even more grand. It was a mansion with an expansive lawn. Jesus said, “Now THIS beautiful home is where a Janitor lives. Over his career at the high school he loved kids no-one else loved and he personally helped send dozens of them to college.” Their stroll continued and each story was as distinctive as its resident. He was still pondering the math when he came to his own home. It was a tiny pallet shelter with few windows and more dirt in the yard than grass. “I don’t understand!” He cried. “Why is my heavenly home so puny compared to everyone else’s?” Jesus looked at him and sighed, “My precious son. This was all we could build with what you sent here during your life.”

Most of us here relate to the middle-class businessman because we think we understand simple economics. But it is impossible to miss the direct link in this gospel between our reward in heaven and our sharing on earth. God’s economy has always and ever will be about Love and Other. Love, by design, doesn’t defy the world’s metrics, it LITERALLY corrects them. The miraculous thing is that when we risk something of ourselves and offer it freely to others, everyone wins.

There have only ever been two kinds of successful humans. Those who constantly fight their way to success and those who constantly help others succeed. The former scratched and clawed their way to a precarious and temporary moment. The latter are raised on the shoulders of countless thankful beneficiaries to a solid and permanent Kingdom.

The shift is in how we read the last sentence of this gospel. If we read, “Where your heart is, your treasure will be also,” we are welcomed to the former world. But if we read, “Where your treasure is, THERE will your heart be also,” we are welcomed to the Kingdom of God.

Contributor and Contributing Body of Christ

The Reverend Alan Akridge is the Rector at Saint Mark’s Episcopal Church in downtown Brunswick, where he has served faithfully, leading the congregation in service as the hands and feet of Jesus Christ in Glynn County and beyond. The close attention to care for the Children of Morningstar through the congregation, clergy, staff, and vestry has remained strong and solid. Even during the pandemic, Saint Mark’s continues to be a shiny example of putting others before themselves in financial and personal support for the Children. Father Alan is a mainstay for on-campus “Church” for the Children and it is not unusual to see the Children of Morningstar enjoying a physical presence at Saint Mark’s as well.

*It takes a lot of everything to **create home and healing** for the foster children, our neighbors, served at Morningstar Children’s Home.*

We invite you to join others in giving \$1 per day during Lent to help support the needs of the children.

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