**11 Pentecost, August 4, 2013, Ps 107; Colossians 3:1-11;Luke 12:13-21, The Rev. Mary S. Trainor**

This week, I read an article in the paper about the Pope's visit to Brazil. It was a hugely successful visit, with the Pope spontaneously working the crowds, kissing babies, and praying for people. On his last day, thousands of people filled the wide 2.5 mile long beach at Copacabana so they could visit with Pope Francis. The article reported that the thousands of people gathered to see the Pope left behind a horrible mess; trash was everywhere. The article included a quote from one of the people at the huge gathering, Jose da Silva, a 75 year old retired farm worker who collects cans to supplement his meager retirement income. Jose said, "**You'd think they could at least put their garbage in all the bins...I'm also pretty surprised that people who call themselves Christians would throw away all this food."** You see, 26% of Brazil's population do not have enough to eat. Jose wanted sharing of the food with the poor. Jose's observation echoes our bible reading message today about how we are to appreciate all that God has given us, and share. What about trash?

I became acutely aware of the importance of trash about 30 years ago, when I lived in a rural area out 10 miles from Albuquerque, New Mexico. We had utilities provided by a co-op, but no trash service. Each week, on the way to work, we had to leave early (with two babies in the car) and take the long trek down a dirt road to the sanitary landfill. There were no regulations and no person there to check you in; you just backed up and dumped your trash bags. While doing this, I up close smelled and saw other people's trash(ugh), as well as scavenging animals. I now never take trash pickup for granted! Getting rid of our trash is important; accumulated trash can cause unsafe conditions in our homes!

A first step in the trash process is to recognize what is trash and what is not trash (e.g., banana is yummy fruit, but a banana peel is trash). One day, under one of my children's beds, I found a rotten banana peel -- or rather I should say, I smelled something really terrible and then followed the smell and found a rotting brown furry thing. Yuck!

We need to recognize what is trash in our lives too: things in our lives that need to be discarded, because they displease God. Paul, in our Epistle today listed this kind of trash. He said, "***Put to death***...***whatever in you is earthly: fornication, impurity, passion, evil desire, and greed....get rid of anger, wrath, slander, and abusive language."*** This is trash; if we were truly living as followers of Christ, we would not do these things. All this trash has one thing in common: the self; when we are exhibiting these earthly behaviors, we are being self centered or selfish. Those people on the beach in Brazil were not bad people, but they were so swept up in the passion of seeing the Pope that they forgot about others: others nearby who were starving, and others who would be adversely affected by all the litter.

We get swept up this way in our lives too, focused on ourselves and forgetting the implications of what we do. All of us have displayed one or more of the behaviors on that trash list of Paul's, and all of us know how difficult it is to dispose of one or more of them. Some of those behaviors have been with us so long that they have become habits. In fact, we and those around us, become so used to those trash behaviors that they don't even call us on them! They just put up with us being that way, but this is not God's way. We can get rid of our lust, anger, self-destructive ways with help from God and each other. Paul uses life and death language here to get our attention, and to relate to the sacrament of Baptism. In Baptism we die to sin and are "***raised with Christ.***" Our Epistle today says, "***you have stripped off the old self with its practices and have clothed yourselves with the new self, which is being renewed in knowledge according to the image of its creator."*** We are to live clothed, renewed by Christ -- this is God's way.

The farmer in Jesus' parable in the Gospel today is not living renewed by Christ -- he is living with his trash. The farmer has had such a great crop yield year, and instead of deciding to share the abundance he hoards it in a bigger barn he builds. He sees the abundance he has been given through the selfish eyes of personal power, not through the eyes of gratitude to God and to those who helped work in his fields. Look at the Gospel now -- we see the word "I" used six times, and the word "my" used four times in just five lines; he is all about the unholy trinity of me, myself, and I. The story does not end happily with the bigger barn, for God says to the rich farmer, "***you fool! This very night your life is being demanded of you."*** Many people go through life thinking they will have the time when they are old to make things right, but we don't know when we are going to die and we don't know if we will have time to make things right. Now is the time to get rid of the trash and live clothed with Christ. As Christians, we are called to live everyday with our focus away from self and towards following God. And if we do, beautiful new things will grow. What will grow are the fruit of the Spirit: ***love, joy, peace, patience, kindness, goodness, faithfulness, gentleness, and self control*** (Galatians 5: 22-23).

We have been given many tools to aid us in clothing ourselves with Christ: prayer, worship, bible study, reading spiritual books, sacraments, counseling, fellowship with Christians, Christian education. Through doing these things, small steps every day, we can become the new self God wants us to be--the new self focused on God and not on ourselves. Paul put it this way in our Epistle reading today, ***"Set your minds on things that are above, not on things that are on earth... Christ is all and in all."*** All that we are and all that we have are the Lord's, Christ is in us and all around us -- and we live with an attitude of gratitude out of this abundance.One of my favorite contemporary hymns, based upon this verse, was written by an artist named Dennis Jernigan; it is called, "**My all in all."** You have the words on a handout in your pew. Linda will sing this beautiful hymn for you during Communion time today. Let's read these words together now  ***"***You are my strength when I am weak, You are the treasure that I seek, You are my all in all, Seeking You as a precious jewel, Lord, to give up I'd be a fool, You are my all in all. Jesus, Lamb of God, Worthy is Your name, Jesus, Lamb of God, Worthy is Your name. Taking my sin, my cross, my shame, Rising again I bless Your name, You are my all in all, When I fall down You pick me up, When I am dry You fill my cup, You are my all in all." Let us pray. Jesus, help us to turn away from our self-focused ways, help us to trash what is not of you, Strengthen us, O Lord, to live into this new life, clothed with kindness, patience, and love, full of gratitude and generosity. Amen.