SERMON TAKE-HOME NOTES — August 10, 2025

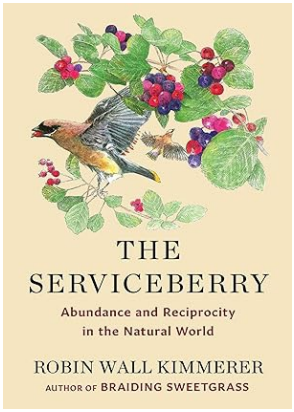
"For where your treasure is, there your heart will be also." Think about that for a moment. Where is your heart right now? What is your treasure? What's most important to you in the world? For me, that's easy. Our precious new grandson. Everything for Ellen and I revolves around helping our grandson get off to a great start in life. And he is such a happy, smiley baby that he simply brings joy to our lives. He is our treasure. That's where our hearts are right now.

How about you? Does your treasure, your heart, lie more with things or with your relationships with loved ones? I think all of us would answer the latter.

So question of the day: why is our capitalist economics centered more on things than on our relationships?

Last week, we began a long stretch in Luke's Gospel where he shows us the economics of God's reign — very different than the economics that have dominated our human history. There are six encounters with rich men that dominate Luke 12-19. Our human economics have been dominated by the values of the rich who tend to act in self-interest in hoarding things, just like the Rich Fool in last week's parable, The rich typically rule, and so their values, their treasure have dominated.

In the verses which follow the Parable of the Rich Fool, Jesus begins to lay out the values of God's reign — this morning's Gospel being the conclusion of those teachings. And we reminded ourselves that Jesus, being himself an indigenous man in the Roman Empire, gives us indigenous wisdom on economics. We need to begin by seeing everything in creation not just as things but as gifts from God to share with each other. "Pay attention to the ravens . . . the lilies. . . ," he says.



In today's world, we have similar wisdom represented through today's indigenous people. We began last week to glean the indigenous wisdom on economics from Potawatomi botanist, Robin Wall Kimmerer, and her book *The Serviceberry: Abundance and Reciprocity in the Natural World*. It is a book which challenges the thing-oriented values of our capitalist economics in favor of the relationship-oriented values of a "gift economy." Here are a couple pearls of wisdom that resonate with Jesus' wisdom in today's Gospel:

> In a gift economy, wealth is understood as having enough to share, and the practice for dealing with abundance is to give it away. In fact, status is determined not by how much one accumulates, but by how much one gives away. The currency in a gift economy is relationship, which is expressed as gratitude, as interdependence and the ongoing cycles of reciprocity. A gift economy nurtures the community bonds that enhance mutual well-being; the economic unit is "we" rather than "I," as all flourishing is mutual. (32-33)

> The Serviceberries show us another model, one based upon reciprocity rather than accumulation, where wealth and security come from the quality of our relationships, not from the illusion of self-sufficiency. (72)

I want to finish where we began: with the relationships we treasure. I made a surprising discovery when doing a word study on the word featured in our Second Reading: *faithfulness*. In the original Greek, it's the word *pistis*. But here's the thing: the first language of the writers of the New Testament was primarily Hebrew, the language of the Old Testament — the language of Jesus, Paul, and the apostles. So it's helpful to ask: what word in Hebrew, used by Jesus and the apostles, is behind the Greek word *pistis*?

We actually have a good way to determine this. More than two hundred years before Jesus, the Hebrew Scriptures ("Old Testament") underwent an official translation called the Septuagint. So we can check wherever the Greek word *pistis* appears in the Septuagint to see which Hebrew word(s) it translates. The Hebrew word which it translates the most is actually the one we know best: "Amen"! (Which looks like this in Hebrew: אמן.) *Amen* means to have faith, or to be faithful. In the Old Testament, it especially describes God's relationship to us being faithful, reliable, enduring.

But here's where it relates to where we began. The commentary I consulted says that *Amen* didn't have a religious origin. Rather, the earliest usages centered on the relationship of mothers to their children: faithful, enduring. Siblings in Christ, I believe we have an important role to play with our fellow citizens to help recenter our economic priorities from things to the quality of our relationships grounded in gift. Grace. Let's follow our hearts to our true treasure. Amen!