

November 20, 2022 Christ the King/Stewardship Dedication

Ladue Chapel Presbyterian Church

Colossians 1:11-20

"The Ringleader of the Heist"

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I am a big fan of old movies. I love putting on Turner Classic Movies and getting lost in the films of yesteryear. I am always up for Cary Grant, Burt Lancaster, Catherine Hepburn, Spencer Tracey, Betty Davis, and the rest of those icons of days gone by. To me that will always be the golden age of filmmaking.

But there is a remake of one of those classic movies I will watch. Ocean's Eleven. There is nothing as good as the original with Frank Sinatra, Sammy Davis Jr., Dean Martin, and their crew robbing casinos in Las Vegas. But the remake with George Clooney and Brad Pitt has its own charms. Early in the film, Rusty, played by Brad Pitt, tells Danny, played by George Clooney, if they are going to pull off this immense heist they are going to need, "a Boesky, a Jim Brown, a Miss Daisy, two Jethros and a Leon Spinks, not to mention the biggest Ella Fitzgerald ever!" These are references to old cons. Each name refers to the role someone needs to play. For instance, "a Miss Daisy" is a driver with a getaway car, referencing "Driving Miss Daisy." For those of you who have not seen either version of "Ocean's Eleven" you can still imagine that pulling off such a remarkable feat as robbing a casino, they will need a variety of people with significant individual talents.

Why the movie conversation this morning? Well, pulling off a major heist has a strong parallel with being the church. Yes, what we do together is not nearly as glamorous as an imaginary Hollywood heist. And, yes, I have never been mistaken for George Clooney. Perhaps Dieter has been mistaken for Brad Pitt. You would have to ask him about that. But we too need a vast variety of people and their talents in order to live into the community God is calling us to be. We need our own share of Boeskys, Jethros, and Ellas.

What we need are a few Peters, people with great enthusiasm. We need some Lydias, generous benefactors to the church. We need Pauls, industrious and indefatigable folks who are always inviting new people into our midst. We need some Noahs, persons whose faith never wavers. We need some Thomases,

those who will ask good questions to make sure we are on the right track. We need Marthas who will take on every task at hand. We need Marys who will listen intently to the wisdom of our Lord.

It takes a whole host of folks for the church to be a faithful witness. And today is a day when we celebrate the commitment we have all made to be the body of Christ in this place. In a few minutes all will be invited to bring forward their pledge card for next year or another symbol of their commitment to this congregation. It is essential that we generously share our gifts and our talents to ensure that we have the facilities, staffing and mission resources we need to be the church together.

And following worship we will be electing officers to serve as leaders of this congregation. We will elect deacons to provide ministries of care and compassion. We will elect elders to wisely discern how God is calling this congregation forward in the years to come. We will elect members of next year's nominating committee to prayerfully consider who is being called to serve in the future.

There are so many essential roles to play. Without each one of us bringing the best of what we can share we cannot be the church God created us to be. Each one of us has a necessary role to play in this shared endeavor. But even if we do all of that there is still one single, sui generis role, that if left unfilled, will leave us nowhere. And this is when we turn to our text from Colossians this morning. We receive an eloquent and elegant portrait of the very lynchpin of our existence as a community of faith, Jesus Christ.

Let's hear a portion of the text again, "He is the image of the invisible God, the firstborn of all creation; for in him all things in heaven and on earth were created, things visible and invisible, whether thrones or dominions or rulers or powers—all things have been created through him and for him. He himself is before all things, and in him all things hold together. He is the head of the body, the church; he is the beginning, the firstborn from the dead, so that he might come to have first place in everything. For in him all the fullness of God was pleased to dwell, and through him God was pleased to reconcile to himself all things, whether on earth or in heaven, by making peace through the blood of his cross."

In my words I might say, Christ is the "A" note of the oboe to which the entire orchestra tunes itself. It is only in

listening to Christ and matching his pitch that we find our way forward to create what we were created to be together.

For those of you mechanically inclined, Christ is the oil that lubricates all of the gears and machinery that we may function well together.

For those of you horticulturally focused, Christ is the sunlight feeding all of living things and inviting them to flourish.

For all of the talented and hard-working people we have at Ladue Chapel, we can accomplish nothing real and lasting without Jesus Christ leading the way for us. With all of the hustle and bustle a community like Ladue Chapel creates it would be easy to lose sight of whom we are seeking to follow. It would be easy to have all our attention solely focused upon what we are doing and how well or not we are doing it. It would be easy to be anxious that even our best efforts may not be enough.

But when we invite Christ into the midst of our collective efforts any arrogance about what we alone can accomplish is extinguished. When we invite Christ into the midst of our collective efforts any anxiety over what we can achieve slips away. When we invite Christ into the midst of our collective efforts we need not ever be overwhelmed by what stands before us.

Earlier in this sermon we heard the conclusion of our text from Colossians. Now let us hear the beginning of our text once more, "May you be made strong with all the strength that comes from his glorious power, and may you be prepared to endure everything with patience, while joyfully giving thanks to the Father, who has enabled you to share in the inheritance of the saints in the light. He has rescued us from the power of darkness and transferred us into the kingdom of his beloved Son, in whom we have redemption, the forgiveness of sins."

We are being told that when we recognize Jesus Christ in our midst we are offered strength, and endurance, joy and forgiveness. For us to play our roles as Peters and Lydias, Pauls and Marys and the rest we need Jesus Christ. Not only do we need Christ to play his role, the only way we can play our roles is with Christ among us.

As we dedicate our pledges this day may Christ inspire us to the generosity of which we are capable. As we elect officers this day may Christ guide them that they may guide us in the years to come. As we continue to seek to be the church together

on each new day may we indeed receive the strength, endurance,
joy, and forgiveness only Christ can offer us.

Thanks be to God. Amen.