



# Redeemer Lutheran Church *of Leisure World*

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## *Reflections on WORSHIP and DISCIPLESHIP by Margo Geesing*

### *“Storytelling Jesus”*

This month we get parables from Jesus. Jesus seems to be a storyteller at heart. The first Sunday in October we have Jesus being questioned by the chief priests and elders. He answers with a question and then tells the parable of the two sons: the first says no but does what was asked; the second says yes to his father and doesn't do what was asked. Jesus ends by asking which had done the will of the father. Everyone answered the first one did the will of the father. There is a connection between these two things and a few points to ponder. First, our presumption: we presume that what we do/did was God's will. Not saying it wasn't, in this case it really is something God wants us to do. We are called to care for God's creation and to feed the hungry. But ... (you all knew that was coming!) how often do we use that phrase, “God's Will” (usually when something bad happens, by the way)? As with the parable that Jesus told, we all assume that the father's will was that the sons went to the vineyard but was that truly the father's will? Maybe the father's will was that his sons told him the truth of what would happen. In that case, neither of them did the father's will. Or maybe they both did the father's will because they answered honestly what their intention was at the time. How can we know the mind of the father or God at any point? We don't. We need to remember that God doesn't need us. In fact, God seems to work quite well all by himself and more often, in spite of us helping. What we need to remember is that God ALLOWS us to be instruments in his will.

This also seems to be the month of tweak the religious leaders! The second Sunday we again have the chief priests and the Pharisees realizing that Jesus is talking about them. And, again we have a vineyard but this one erupts in violence and, as Christians, we recognize the relationship of the parable to what happened to Jesus and thereafter, the world. It can also be a call to us to look honestly at ourselves. How do we react when we hear something that doesn't sit right with our views? Or is difficult to hear? Or requires us to change? Even today God prods us out of our set ways and challenges us to change.

The third week we have not a vineyard but a wedding banquet. A few years ago, weddings abounding in my life [now it's little ones]. My children were of an age where my

eldest and a bunch of their friends are getting married. In a 3-year period there is were 10 weddings! And the RSVP issues are insane! You send out invitations. You give a date for a response. You call to remind people to respond. Then they don't show up! Or they say no / don't answer and still show up expecting to be welcomed. So, I feel for the groom's father. God is like that. He gives us all invitations. He's excited and how do we react: Egh. I'll show up or not. If I'm not busy. If I have nothing else to do. If I don't get a better offer. If it's not too hard. If I'm not required to do anything. So, God goes out and finds others, but even these are required to make the effort, to meet minimum standards. We really need to find the JOY and the URGENCY in God's invitation to be a part of the celebration.

*Render unto Caesar what is Caesar's and unto God what is God's.* We have all heard it but we generally don't do it. We fudge on our taxes, we don't vote, we don't take an interest or active role in what's going on unless we are personally affected. We miss worship, we don't volunteer, we don't support financially as well as we could, we skip prayer, we don't do things to build us spiritually. And we wonder why things aren't going well. So, what do we owe to Caesar compared to what we owe to God? In this case I am going to cheat and steal a little of what would be the 22<sup>nd</sup> Sunday of Pentecost Gospel (we will be doing Reformation Sunday instead) to answer and just do what we owe to God. I believe that if we give to God what is God's, then Caesar will be just fine! The steal part is: *"You shall love the Lord your God with all your heart, and with all your soul, and with all your mind."* This is the greatest and first commandment. And a second is like it: *"You shall love your neighbor as yourself"* Matthew 22:37-40. If we truly act from a **generous** love of God all else will fall in place. You will love yourself [Which is a downfall of many. We either love ourselves too much or not enough] and will love your neighbor. And the answer part: *1 Corinthians 13:4-7* is what it means to love generously: *"Love is patient, love is kind. It does not envy, it does not boast, it is not proud. It does not dishonor others, it is not self-seeking, it is not easily angered, it keeps no record of wrongs. Love does not delight in evil but rejoices with the truth. It always protects, always trusts, always hopes, always perseveres."* If this is what we act on, we would do well.

The last Sunday of October we will celebrate Reformation Sunday and we get a Gospel from John. Jesus speaks of the connection between truth and freedom. He is referring to God's truth. The more we align ourselves and our will to what God wants the more freedom we have. We hear this theme throughout the Gospels. Jesus calls us to share his yoke for his burden is light [Matthew 11:28-30]. He calls us to trust in him, and our answers to our accusers will be given to us [Mark 13:11]. He calls us to be poor in spirit, to mourn, to be meek, to hunger and thirst for justice, to be merciful, to be pure of heart, to be peacemakers, and to be righteous [Matthew 5:3-10]. When we are living in the truth, we do not have to fear. We do not have to be afraid. There is great freedom in living a life without fear. When we live this kind of life: not steeped in sin, not being afraid, and walking with and towards Jesus we are free. We are called to walk in the light and to be light to others. We journey in faith together, in trust and freedom.