

**The Lessons Appointed for  
Use on the  
Sunday closest to July 20**



Proper 13  
Year C  
RCL

Hosea 11:1-11  
Psalm 107:1-9, 43  
Luke 12:13-21

**The Collect**

The Collect

Let your continual mercy, O Lord, cleanse and defend your Church; and, because it cannot continue in safety without your help, protect and govern it always by your goodness; through Jesus Christ our Lord, who lives and reigns with you and the Holy Spirit, one God, for ever and ever. *Amen.*

**Hosea 11:1-11**

when Israel was a child, I loved him, and out of Egypt I called my son.

The more I called them, the more they went from me; they kept sacrificing to the Baals, and offering incense to idols.

Yet it was I who taught Ephraim to walk, I took them up in my arms; but they did not know that I healed them.

I led them with cords of human kindness, with bands of love.

I was to them like those who lift infants to their cheeks. I bent down to them and fed them.

They shall return to the land of Egypt, and Assyria shall be their king, because they have refused to return to me.

The sword rages in their cities, it consumes their oracle-priests, and devours because of their schemes.

My people are bent on turning away from me. To the Most High they call, but he does not raise them up at all.

How can I give you up, Ephraim? How can I hand you over, O Israel?

How can I make you like Admah? How can I treat you like Zeboiim?

My heart recoils within me; my compassion grows warm and tender.

I will not execute my fierce anger; I will not again destroy Ephraim;

for I am God and no mortal, the Holy One in your midst, and I will not come in wrath.

They shall go after the LORD, who roars like a lion; when he roars, his children shall come trembling from the west.

They shall come trembling like birds from Egypt, and like doves from the land of Assyria; and I will return them to their homes, says the Lord.

### Psalm 107:1-9, 43

#### Confitemini Domino

- 1 Give thanks to the LORD, for he is good, \* and his mercy endures for ever.
- 2 Let all those whom the LORD has redeemed proclaim \* that he redeemed them from the hand of the foe.
- 3 He gathered them out of the lands; \* from the east and from the west, from the north and from the south.
- 4 Some wandered in desert wastes; \* they found no way to a city where they might dwell.
- 5 They were hungry and thirsty; \* their spirits languished within them.
- 6 Then they cried to the LORD in their trouble, \* and he delivered them from their distress.
- 7 He put their feet on a straight path \* to go to a city where they might dwell.
- 8 Let them give thanks to the LORD for his mercy \* and the wonders he does for his children.
- 9 For he satisfies the thirsty \* and fills the hungry with good things.

43 Whoever is wise will ponder these things, \* and consider well the mercies of the LORD.

**Luke 12:13-21**

someone in the crowd said to Jesus, “Teacher, tell my brother to divide the family inheritance with me.” But he said to him, “Friend, who set me to be a judge or arbitrator over you?” And he said to them, “Take care! Be on your guard against all kinds of greed; for one’s life does not consist in the abundance of possessions.” Then he told them a parable: “The land of a rich man produced abundantly. And he thought to himself, ‘What should I do, for I have no place to store my crops?’ Then he said, ‘I will do this: I will pull down my barns and build larger ones, and there I will store all my grain and my goods. And I will say to my soul, ‘Soul, you have ample goods laid up for many years; relax, eat, drink, be merry.’ But God said to him, ‘You fool! This very night your life is being demanded of you. And the

things you have prepared, whose will they be?’ So it is with those who store up treasures for themselves but are not rich toward God.”

## SERMON

You know what? I didn't learn much about human nature in my long years as a prosecutor. Crimes are just so darned banal. I wanted it, I took it. I'm addicted so I stole. He insulted me. She wanted it. After a time, criminal law and the people who committed violations of it, became, to me at least, pretty uninteresting. For insights into human nature I found I needed to look to my domestic relations practice. THERE you can see what makes people tick!

I recall a case my office mate, Jeff, had. The divorce was long and contentious. The parties couldn't agree on the day of the week and it went back and forth through numerous hearings on increasingly trivial matters. Finally, it came down to a house plant. Who gets the stupid HOUSE PLANT? For this we spend money? Ap-



parently, we do. As it happened, Jeff won possession of the stupid house plant for his client. The attorney for the other side, with a sour expression, brought the dumb thing in and deposited it on our counter. I've got to say, it was the most down-at-the-roots thing you ever saw. The attorney set it on the counter and left without a word, shaking his head as he went.

Over the coming weeks, that stupid house plant became a sort of fixture in the office, since Jeff's client refused to come pick it up, despite numerous communications. Finally, it faded into the background of our awareness, no more noticeable than the motto on our currency, "In God we Trust". When was the last time you took the time to read a dollar bill?

At some point, it dropped its first leaf. No one knows when, because no one saw it anymore. It was a worthless thing that had become valuable only because some-

one had spent money to possess it. To the office staff, who had not paid money for possession of it, it was just in the way. Jeff's client never came to pick up the thing and it continued to shed leaves on the counter, beneath the notice of anyone in the office until, one day, the secretary dropped it in the trash and ended the farce.

The truth is that nobody wanted the stupid thing. What each side wanted was to exercise power over the other, or to humiliate the other, or to cause the other to spend money in revenge for whatever event it was which had caused the bond between husband and wife to be destroyed. Of course these hidden motives, so clear to everyone in our office, were completely hidden from the parties, each of whom imagined that they were pursuing high-sounding ideals like justice and the rule of law, and feeling pretty pleased with themselves about it.

someone in the crowd said to Jesus, “Teacher, tell my brother to divide the family inheritance with me.” But he said to him, “Friend, who set me to be a judge or arbitrator over you?” And he said to them, “Take care! Be on your guard against all kinds of greed; for one’s life does not consist in the abundance of possessions.”

We get greedy over the most astonishing things. A few billion years ago, a honking big piece of rock, the shrapnel from the detonation of a star uncountable miles away smacked into our planet. There was no living thing on the planet to notice, nor to notice that the piece of rock contained shiny yellow metal. It was worthless until, eons later some genius decided to value the shiny yellow stuff. That was the case with the dispute between the brothers. Wouldn't you just love to know what was behind that? Was it a big family war that had festered for years which kept the brothers from negotiating a fair division of the inheritance? Was it

simple greed? Could the whole thing have blown up over some stupid house plant or other family tchotchkes which now tore at the fabric of a family? Wouldn't you just love to know?

Our fatal fondness for “stuff” is going to be the end of us, you mark my words. I’m at the Chapel of St. Arbuck’s as I write this. An older man just walked in wearing a pistol. Why is the older man wearing a pistol? I didn’t ask, but I can imagine that he fears someone might try to take his stuff if he isn't prepared to defend it. Better a thief should lose his life than that his stuff should be taken. Tom Waits said:

**We are buried beneath the weight of information, which is being confused with knowledge; quantity is being confused with abundance and wealth with happiness. We are monkeys with guns and money.**

Just think of the time and effort we expend on looking

after the stupid house plants of our lives, the things we like but which are really worthless except for the value we place on them! Think of what we might accomplish were we to divert some of that energy to the purposes for which we were created!

“The land of a rich man produced abundantly. And he thought to himself, ‘What should I do, for I have no place to store my crops?’ Then he said, ‘I will do this: I will pull down my barns and build larger ones, and there I will store all my grain and my goods. And I will say to my soul, ‘Soul, you have ample goods laid up for many years; relax, eat, drink, be merry.’ But God said to him, ‘You fool! This very night your life is being demanded of you. And the things you have prepared, whose will they be?’ So it is with those who store up treasures for themselves but are not rich toward God.”

Well, there's a sermon you've heard before. Put your faith in the true things and don't be distracted by a search after wealth. It's clearly good advice or Jesus

wouldn't have bothered to offer it, but like the hidden motives which drive families apart over stupid house plants and other worthless tchotchkes, there's more to the parable than good advice. Our faithless focus not only leads us astray, it wounds God. Did you really listen to the Old Testament reading? It's a love poem from a wronged lover! God, the Creator of all there is, displays his heartbreak in public through His prophet.

when Israel was a child, I loved him,  
and out of Egypt I called my son.  
The more I called them,  
the more they went from me;  
they kept sacrificing to the Baals,  
and offering incense to idols.  
Yet it was I who taught Ephraim to walk,  
I took them up in my arms;  
but they did not know that I healed them.  
I led them with cords of human kindness,  
with bands of love.  
I was to them like those

who lift infants to their cheeks.  
I bent down to them and fed them.

How could we miss the anguish in the words God spoke through Hosea? We have imposed hell upon ourselves this week. Gilroy. Dayton. El Paso. Hell fueled by defense of tribe, hatred of others, the power of death we sell so thoughtlessly. What of the parents of the young white men who have done this? My heart breaks for them. Can you not hear them crying, “When he was a child, I loved him, but the more I called him, the more he went from me! He turned his allegiance away from me to evil things, even though it was me who taught him to walk! I took him in my arms and healed his hurts when he fell, but he couldn’t see that it was me who cared for him. I tried to lead him with cords of kindness, and bands of love. I lifted that baby to my cheeks and fed him, yet....”

Acknowledge the anguish God the Father experiences, weeping from our mindless and stubborn refusal to acknowledge that He walks with us.

AMEN



## BENEDICTION

Me and those like me are valuable. Those not like me are worthless. Any worth those not like me attain is attained at the expense of me and mine, and justice demands that I be revenged. Weep with our Father who must witness our coldness of heart. Weep with our Father as we lift up tribal mottoes in place of the Gospel. Weep with our Father as we choose to be consumers of ritual, regular attenders at services where we “hear the word proclaimed” but turn our backs on opportunities to be doers of the Gospel throughout God’s Creation.

The Lord bless you and keep you;  
the Lord make his face to shine upon you, and be gracious to you;  
the Lord lift up his countenance upon you, and give you peace.

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Optional parts of the readings are set off in square brackets.

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