

Sermon for 2019 Yr C Proper 14
Preached Sunday 08/11/2019 at St. James', Mount Vernon
By the Rev. Charles F. Brock

Who here likes to receive a gift?

This is the time of year when there is a lot of exchanging gifts in my family. My birthday, my mother's birthday, Heidi's birthday, and my father's birthday all fall within a three-week window. All of us Leo's!

Gifts are great, but they can be hard. They can be expensive or extravagant, they can be playful and unexpected, they can be an experience rather than a thing. Some gifts leave the recipient scratching their head, wondering what the giver was thinking! We want a gift to mean something, to be personal, to be appreciated. A gift carries the burden of trying to say something: I love you, I admire you, I'm proud of you, I celebrate with you.

I know that I get tired of trying to find the perfect gift. What matters most is the truism, It's the thought that counts. And so I most often give something pretty simple, but with a card that explains why this particular gift is meant for the recipient. The gift itself is less important than how the gift is given.

Jesus wants us to know that we are the recipients of a gift. God wants us to have the kingdom. Wow, I say. Now there's a complicated gift! It's just what I wanted... when in fact I'm not entirely sure what I've just been given... and are there strings attached? God wants to give me the kingdom... what do I have to do to deserve that gift?

But what Jesus tells us about this gift is what makes it a real gift... it is your Father's good pleasure to give you the kingdom. God wants us to have the kingdom, it is his pleasure, his delight, to give it to us. It is not something that we have to earn, it is something God gives us for the simple reason that he wants to.

When Jesus tells us is that God is pleased to give us the kingdom, he is telling us something really important about God. The gift of the kingdom says more than that God loves us; it says more than that he forgives us; it says more than that he is proud of us. It says that God's deepest nature is to welcome us into his life, to share his life with us. God invites us into the kingdom, to know the fullness of life, life that is filled with God's presence, life that is rich with relationship, with gratitude, and with love. God gives us life that embraces us just as much as we embrace it.

It is God's good pleasure to give us the kingdom. It is a gift grander and greater than we can imagine; it is a gift we receive by accepting it with our whole being. And then, prepare to be surprised by all the ways in which God's kingdom overtakes the kingdom of this world.

Amen.