

Grace Episcopal Church  
13th Sunday after Pentecost  
Rev Brian C Justice

Amos 6.1, 4-7  
Psalm 146  
1 Timothy 6.6-19  
Luke 16.19-31

### The Time To Wake Up Is Now

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O God,  
may we wake up  
and be like you,  
not later,  
now!  
Amen.

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There are two things about the teaching of Jesus in the Gospel that we cannot forget: it is always in the present tense and it is always about you.

There is plenty of history in the Bible, but the Gospel teachings of Jesus - his sayings and his parables - are not historical narratives about other people in other times.

What we read in the Gospel is not exactly like an account of the rule of Julius Caesar or the sinking of the Titanic: those narratives are about other times and other people.

You and I were not in the Roman Senate on the Ides of March in 44 BC when Julius Caesar was stabbed to death or on the Titanic for the fateful journey across the Atlantic in April 1912.

No ... the sayings and parables of Jesus are of another order: they are happening now and they are about you and me.

This raises a hard question today.

The rich man dressed in purple ... the poor man by the gate ...

Which one are you?

Which one am I?

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But let's juxtapose that hard question with the deepest promise and the deepest possibility in Christian theology:

*theosis* (in Greek) and *deification* (in Latin).

Theosis / Deification ... these terms mean literally becoming like God or becoming God-like ... becoming one with God. Theosis / deification mean — through God's grace and through our free choice - participating as fully as possible in the life of God through love ... love that is manifest in thought, word, and deed.

Becoming like God ... becoming one with God ... living and loving into the One who is Life and Love itself. Human life and divine life - your life and God's life - as One Life.

Theosis. Deification. Wow!

This possibility - this promise - is what all of the saints and the mystics talk about. And it's expressed by many of the most profound thinkers in the Christian tradition.

St Athanasius of Alexandria in the 4th century:

"God became a human being so that a human being might become God." (*On the Incarnation*)

Meister Eckhart, German theologian of the 14th century:

"... (we) must be changed, transformed into God, reborn in God and of God, so that God is Father and we become his children, his only-begotten children..."

(*The Book of Divine Comfort*)

Martin Laird, Augustinian monk and professor of theology at Villanova University:

"God in Christ has taken into Himself the brokenness of the human condition. Hence, human woundedness, brokenness, and death itself are transformed from dead ends to doorways into Life. In the divinizing humanity of Christ, bruises become balm."

(*Into the Silent Land: A Guide to the Christian Practice of Contemplation*)

C.S. Lewis, the 20th century author, professor, and Anglican lay theologian:

“God sees before Him ... a self-centered, greedy, grumbling, rebellious human animal. But God says ‘Let’s pretend that this is not a mere creature, but our Child. It is like Christ in so far as it is a Human, for Christ became Human. Let us pretend that it is also like Christ in Spirit. Let us treat it as if it were what in fact it is not. Let us pretend in order to make the pretense into a reality.’ God looks at you as if you were a little Christ: Christ stands beside you to turn you into one.”

*(Mere Christianity)*

Theosis / Deification is the deepest promise, the deepest possibility expressed in the Christian faith.

God has done (and is doing) God’s part: God has given us unending grace and love *and* given us the teachings which we are to live by and make it happen.

Now, we must do our part: we must act. *You and I... now ...* we must choose to live and to love according to those teachings.

And that is what is so terrifying *and* so hopeful about today’s Gospel. It can go either way.

While the poor man by the gate endured his sufferings, the rich man dressed in purple cared only for his own pleasure and profit. He chose not to serve his neighbor. He let the poor man at his gate suffer. When, having lost everything, the rich man realized the consequences of his unwise choices, he begged Abraham to go and warn his brothers. Abraham said to him, “They have Moses and the Prophets; they should listen to them.” The rich man said, “No ... if someone goes to them from the dead, they will repent.” Abraham said to him, “If they don’t listen to Moses and the Prophets, they won’t be convinced even if someone rises from the dead.”

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The teaching could not be clearer. The time to wake up is now! The time to act is now! The time to live is now! The time to live the life divine is now!

We have the Law of Moses. We have the Prophets. We have the Gospel. We are sealed in Baptism and marked as Christ’s own forever. But we must act. We must be, as St James says, doers of the Word and not hearers only.

“Doers of the Word” ... that means real action.

You and I are invited to theosis, to deification, to participation in the human / divine life through the vital ministries here at Grace Episcopal Church – be a reader, an usher, a greeter, a helper with coffee hour or the garden ministry or pastoral care ... sing in the choir, work in the altar guild ... enjoy even more deeply the adventure that is your life ... becoming God-like ... right here, right now in this community!

And after the Deacon dismisses you today ... go into the world and do it there too ... love and serve the people of the world.

Whatever your financial status, don't be the “rich man dressed in purple” ... go and

Feed the hungry.

Clothe the naked.

Visit the sick.

Welcome the stranger.

Love your neighbor.

Do what you can right where you are.

And make real the promise and the possibility that is yours ... theosis / deification ... and become like the One who created you and, in so doing, change your life and change the world.

Amen.