

Who wants to be a millionaire?

Anyone?

And how do we get there?

If we are lucky enough to go on the television game show 'Who Wants to Be a Millionaire?' we could call on our lifeline to help us guess who was last seen in public with Justin Timberlake.

Was it Britney Spears or was it Kim Kardashian?

Or, if we are less lucky but still able-bodied, we could work for it, with our Protestant ethic, pinching our pennies in a lifetime of labor.

Or, in the kingdom of heaven, according to Jesus, in that vision of justice and peace *on earth as it is in heaven*, when all has been made well and we have finally figured out how to live together on this planet as God intended all along, a million dollars—or two—or five—could just land in our lap, without any warning, like the talents that befall the servants in our Scripture lesson for today.

A 'talent,' in the first century Jewish experience, is what an average first century Jewish laborer would earn over the course of roughly fifteen years. Which, would you believe, for the average American on an average American salary is a roughly a million dollars?

And in the kingdom of heaven, Jesus says, to the first century Jewish laborers who have become his closest disciples, when we have finally figured out how to live on this planet in justice and in peace as God intended all along, in the kingdom of heaven, it is as if a rich man just hands over a million dollars, or two, or five, *because he trusts us* with such amazing wealth just landing in our lap without any warning.

And we get to decide what to do with it.

We could invest it . . .

We could spend it . . .

We could bury it . . .

Or, on a cold day like today, we could all hop a plane to Florida!

[Can anyone say 'Disney World'!]

It seems ludicrous, of course, to imagine a million dollars just falling out of the sky and into our pockets just because the kingdom of heaven has come.

But that is the point, Jesus says to his disciples, who are, themselves, poor laborers who could work for millennia and still not have a million.

They are the ones who have already walked away from what little they *did* have in order to follow Jesus to the heart of Jerusalem, where the Kingdom of Herod has replaced the kingdom of heaven: where the wealthy hoard what they have, instead of spreading it around. And the community of Christ has come, with their leader riding triumphant on a donkey, to stoke the wrath of the wealthy in the Kingdom of Herod by calling them to account for their callousness.

It *is* ludicrous, Jesus knows, for these disciples at the edge of what will turn out to be the cross, to imagine a million dollars just falling out of the sky and into our pockets because the kingdom of heaven has come.

And that is exactly the point . . .

In the kingdom of heaven, Jesus says, in the reign of God *on earth as it is in heaven*, that way of being that comes when we finally figure out how to live on this planet in justice and in peace as God intended all along, in THAT kingdom of heaven, Jesus says, we are *all* millionaires. Even the ones who end up with one mere talent, with one mere million, because the wealth that has been hoarded by the richest among us has been shared. And just lands in our lap without any warning.

And we get to decide what to do with it.

In the Presbyterian world, we say that the church is a 'provisional demonstration of the kingdom of God' [emphasis on *provisional*].

And in the Presbyterian world, we say our job is to live "*as if*" the kingdom of heaven is already here. *As if* that million dollars has already fallen out of the sky and landed in our lap.

And the truth is, in a very real sense, it already has.

Here at First United, here in The Empire State, here in North America, even though we have been slogging our way through an economic slump, the truth is we have wealth beyond imagining compared to the rest of the world.

Just think what the Lily of the Valley Presbyterian Church, in Agua Prieta, Mexico—that tithing community of migrants and maquiladoras we visited in my sermon two weeks ago—would do with our 'mere million' . . .

The truth is, we already are millionaires

And what will we do with our million, with our talent, as the 'provisional demonstration of the kingdom of God,' holding forth the hope of justice and peace, *on earth as it is in heaven*, when all has been made well and we have finally figured out how to live together on this planet, as God intended all along?

Will we bury it? Will we spend it wisely? Will we invest it broadly? Will we spread it around for all to share? The choice is ours!