

# TREASURE



**For where your treasure is, there your heart will be also. – Luke 12**

**Scripture:**

**Hebrews 11**

1. Now faith is being sure of what we hope for and certain of what we do not see.
2. This is what the ancients were commended for.
3. By faith we understand that the universe was formed at God's command, so that what is seen was not made out of what was visible.
8. By faith Abraham, when called to go to a place he would later receive as his inheritance, obeyed and went, even though he did not know where he was going.
9. By faith he made his home in the promised land like a stranger in a foreign country; he lived in tents, as did Isaac and Jacob, who were heirs with him of the same promise.
10. For he was looking forward to the city with foundations, whose architect and builder is God.
11. By faith Abraham, even though he was past age--and Sarah herself was barren--was enabled to become a father because he considered him faithful who had made the promise.
12. And so from this one man, and he as good as dead, came descendants as numerous as the stars in the sky and as countless as the sand on the seashore.
13. All these people were still living by faith when they died. They did not receive the things promised; they only saw them and welcomed them from a distance. And they admitted that they were aliens and strangers on earth.
14. People who say such things show that they are looking for a country of their own.
15. If they had been thinking of the country they had left, they would have had opportunity to return.
16. Instead, they were longing for a better country--a heavenly one. Therefore God is not ashamed to be called their God, for he has prepared a city for them.

**Luke 12**

32. "Do not be afraid, little flock, for your Father has been pleased to give you the kingdom.
33. Sell your possessions and give to the poor. Provide purses for yourselves that will not wear out, a treasure in heaven that will not be exhausted, where no thief comes near and no moth destroys.
34. For where your treasure is, there your heart will be also.
35. "Be dressed ready for service and keep your lamps burning,
36. like men waiting for their master to return from a wedding banquet, so that when he comes and knocks they can immediately open the door for him.
37. It will be good for those servants whose master finds them watching when he comes. I tell you the truth, he will dress himself to serve, will have them recline at the table and will come and wait on them.
38. It will be good for those servants whose master finds them ready, even if he comes in the second or third watch of the night.
39. But understand this: If the owner of the house had known at what hour the thief was coming, he would not have let his house be broken into.
40. You also must be ready, because the Son of Man will come at an hour when you do not expect him."



**TREASURE**

because they discovered a magnificent banquet for their

Gold fever brought people to the American west in search of instant wealth. Some found it, others went home without it. But when the gold ran out, most stayed

descendants and for generations to come that was far more valuable than the gold that brought them there.

♪ **MUSIC: SHENANDOAH** ♪

**GOLD RUSH PASTORS**

In January of 1848, James Marshall had a work crew camped on the American River at Coloma near Sacramento. The crew was building a sawmill for John Sutter. On the cold, clear morning of January 24, Marshall found a few tiny gold nuggets.

Word soon leaked out, first to the rest of California, and then to the world. Thus began one of the largest human migrations in history as a half-million people from around the world descended upon California, drawn by “gold fever” in search of instant wealth.

In another dozen years, towns would be born along rivers, in sea ports, and in places where agriculture could be supported.

In another dozen years the railroads would bring settlers and their families, as the ownership of the American west was about to change hands.

How it changed hands, from the Indians to the white men is a sad story in itself.

**DEPARTURE SERMONS**

The Protestant ministers of the East Coast were generally suspicious of the Gold Rush in California. In the departure sermons they preached to groups of parishioners before they headed west for Northern California, by and large, they warned their young men and women not to lose themselves in Egyptian or Babylonian bondage in California. Their words were generally unheeded.

They warned:

- that the quest for gold can do horrible things to a person,
- that the Indians to whom the land belonged would be a problem at the very least, not to mention the violent ambitions of the very people with whom they traveled.
- They knew about the lawless, faithless, and often heartless shanty towns that spring up at the edge of civilization. These were rough towns along the trails where the covered wagons took families, and in ports where the ships and their crews stopped after the end of a long journey. It was in the sea ports that weary travelers cut loose to raise a lot of hell. In the 1840's, one of those intractable ports was San Francisco, gateway to Northern California.
- The Protestant ministers who traveled to California in 1849, 1850, and 1851 found themselves in a maelstrom, in a gold-crazed world of inflated prices and misplaced values. Disease and death were everywhere, including the ministers own families. In one ghastly week, Dr. Jean Leonhard ver Mehr of Grace Church, San Francisco, buried four of his five daughters, dead from diphtheria. Twice, the

Reverend James Woods of First Presbyterian, Stockton, conducted impromptu funeral services in a brothel. That was just a year before Rev. James Woods came to Santa Rosa to establish the First Presbyterian Church.

♪ **MUSIC: SIMPLE GIFTS** ♪

**PARISH LIFE**

But these gold rush ministers quickly created the busy parish life of an active church. The Reverend Albert Williams of First Presbyterian, San Francisco, for example, performed 150 weddings between 1849 and 1852.

San Francisco attracted many first-rate ministerial talents, figures such as Samuel Hopkins Willey of Howard Street Presbyterian; Methodist William Taylor of the Seamen's Bethel; Bishop William Ingraham Kip of Grace Cathedral; Timothy Dwight Hunt of First Congregational; and William Anderson Scott of Calvary Presbyterian. Each of these ministers brought to San Francisco rich and complex inner worlds and cultural visions, which they sought to externalize.

Timothy Dwight Hunt, for example, urged his parishioners “to make California the Massachusetts of the Pacific.”

William Scott celebrated the age of progressive urbanism he saw dawning in San Francisco, “an Athenian time of trade and culture.” Almost single-handedly, this Presbyterian minister founded and edited *The Pacific Expositor*, more than fifty pages per issue, sent to subscribers throughout the country. The paper was based on strong cultural premises, with no apologies for the frontier, the newness of the region, the overnight nature of the city.

Called to Cavalry Presbyterian in 1862, Charles Wadsworth of Philadelphia is typical of the second generation of ministers who came not so much to a frontier as to a province.

**Whereas in the 1850's Scott sought to direct emerging energies, Wadsworth in 1868 could thank God for a city “not yet twenty years old, with a population as large and an architecture surpassing all that Paris could show after a thousand years of progress, and all around, spreading away in matchless loveliness, these valleys, where our merchant-princes even now delight to plant gardens like Eden and to build palaces to embosom a new social life and enshrine coming types of art fairer than the Greek.”**

♪ **MUSIC: JUST A CLOSER WALK** ♪

## SANTA ROSA

Rev. James Woods was born in Massachusetts. After completing his seminary training, he served churches in Alabama. Then in 1849, the Presbyterian mission board called him to serve in California. So Woods sailed around the Horn of South America, and stayed for a period of time in San Francisco, prior to the stepping into his first western pulpit in Stockton.

**In October 1855, six years before Lincoln became president in 1861, Rev. Woods brought religious services to the courthouse that sat at the center of a small frontier city, Santa Rosa. Over time, this courthouse congregation would become the First Presbyterian Church of Santa Rosa according to the record of Presbytery of the Redwoods.**

People came from ten miles away for religious services and education. A man named Cyrus Alexander had been a mountain man, but now he and his family came to the church from a fertile valley north of the city where Alexander lived, and had planted some crops. John Treadwell from Santa Rosa became Rev. Woods' Sunday School superintendent. The people living on the Santa Rosa plain had been hoping for a Protestant church that would minister to their families for a long time. In 1855 they finally had one.

♪ **MUSIC: SIMPLE GIFTS** ♪

### A FRONTIER CHURCH

You all know that I have given you a very sanitized and superficial version of the Protestant ministers and the challenges of the churches of Northern California in the 1850's.

Why? Because our church is an heir to that historic legacy. In fact, Church of the Roses resembles the frontier churches more than do the more established churches in our community. We are hungry for the Lord's work, obstacles are many, we need each other more than ever before, and we are scrappy and inventive because we have to be to survive.

Are we part of organized religion? Well, some days are better organized than others. And why do we keep at it?

### A BANQUET OF GOOD THINGS

God has invited us to a banquet of good things. They are spiritual things that are more valuable than gold, and we are hungry to enjoy them. Yet there are some who stay at home, who do not accept God's invitation; they find excuses, they do not join the battle, and they do not make the trip to the Promised Land with us. In the end, it is their own choice.

Jesus frequently compared his invitation to the kingdom of God to a generous landlord who invited everyone he could think of to banquet in his home. As I read this lesson to you, think about the invitations you have heard from Jim, Amy and Karen over the last three weeks. Our banquet is tonight.

16. Jesus replied: "A certain man was preparing a great banquet and invited many guests.
17. At the time of the banquet he sent his servant to tell those who had been invited, 'Come, for everything is now ready.'
18. "But they all alike began to make excuses. The first said, 'I have just bought a field, and I must go and see it. Please excuse me.'
19. "Another said, 'I have just bought five yoke of oxen, and I'm on my way to try them out. Please excuse me.'
20. "Still another said, 'I just got married, so I can't come.'
21. "The servant came back and reported this to his master. Then the owner of the house became angry and ordered his servant, 'Go out quickly into the streets and alleys of the town and bring in the poor, the crippled, the blind and the lame.'
22. "'Sir,' the servant said, 'what you ordered has been done, but there is still room.'
23. "Then the master told his servant, 'Go out to the roads and country lanes and make them come in, so that my house will be full.'
24. I tell you, not one of those men who were invited will get a taste of my banquet.'" Luke 14:16-24

### OUR STEWARDSHIP DRIVE

The message of our stewardship drive has been profoundly simple. We have invited you to a family dinner at the church. It will be a banquet, and the banquet will be filled with good things. And frankly it will be a little bit fancy.

Our stewardship banquet comes right out of the scripture. God has invited us to a banquet. It is a sit down meal and you will be served; all you have to do is come. There will be no trickery. We will save discussions of the budget for another time. We will not be making impassioned speeches about our programs, our missions, our staff, and how much money we have in the bank. Our invitation is like the owner of the house who did not invite the people to discuss his crops, his family, nor the furnishings of his house. He just wanted them to join him in the celebration of all that the land had to offer.

That is our plan tonight.

Not only do we plan to share dinner with you, but Betty Witchey and I are going to play music for you. The choir is going to sing to you, the children are going to sing to you, and the youth group has a little skit.

Althea will play for us while we eat and visit.

Pledge cards will be on the table, or you may bring the one sent from the office. We tried to make it as easy as possible..

While we have much to celebrate, we have highlighted just one program this year. It is the same program celebrated by Chris Smith in the Press Democrat three days ago. And it is the program honored the week before by the Board of Education of Santa Rosa. They said we are doing a good job feeding breakfast to seventy or more kids each morning. They said other churches should follow that example.

And that is the church we want to be.

We have a treasure in this church... don't we.

Our treasure is not our building, not even the money we give away. Our treasure is that for fifty-five years, people have gathered here to worship God and be involved in God's kingdom. We have been of service to God in our community.

You and I are part of that treasure. The gold in California is the faith God has lead us to, and yet it is as delicate as a flower and as temporary as one generation. Our memory is also our hope.

### **GOLD IS IN THE FAITH OF THE PEOPLE**

Maybe you came to California for gold. The gold is in the ground. But treasure is in your heart. The most important treasure in California is sitting beside you. Our gold is in the faith of God's people. There is still so much to be done for those people, for their children, and for our future.

**Nature's first green is gold,  
Her hardest hue to hold.  
Her early leaf's a flower;  
But only so an hour.  
Then leaf subsides to leaf.  
So Eden sank to grief,  
So dawn goes down to day.  
Nothing gold can stay.**

**-- Robert Frost**

**The gold is not the gift,  
The people are not the gift  
The faith of the people  
That is the gift outright.**

**-- John Cushman**

And so... A certain man prepared a great banquet and invited many guests. Jim and Amy and Karen and I have represented the man. He sent his helpers to tell those who had been invited, 'Come, for everything is now ready.' Thanks to the people in the office, to Marge Snater on the phone, and to Dolores Borchers and her friends in the kitchen, to the sextons and volunteers. Thanks to our musicians who will inspire us tonight.

And they prepared the banquet so that they could enjoy each other and think about God. I've asked my friend, Frank Hamilton to remind us about God tonight.

So do not find excuses like the people in the parable, but come join us for a celebration of our frontier church on the western edge where our county began. Presbyterians were here when California became a state, and they are part of our future.

This is not an invitation I am ashamed to make, and it is an offer you should not refuse. It is a simple gift. Come and eat, and visit, and sing with us.

The table is ready; let the banquet begin.

♪ **CLOSING MUSIC: JUST A CLOSER WALK** ♪

*(The music listed during the sermon was beautifully played on the clavivova keyboard by Althea Wright who will be our new organist beginning in November.)*



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