



Sermon for the Seventh Sunday of Easter  
Rev. Jonathan Stepp  
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In the name of the Father, and of the Son, and of the Holy Spirit. Amen.

A little lady answered a knock on the door one day, only to be confronted by a well dressed young man carrying a vacuum cleaner.

“Good morning,” said the young man. “If I can take a couple minutes of your time, I would like to demonstrate the very latest in high power vacuum cleaning”

“Go away” said the old lady. “I’m broke and haven’t got any money!” She proceeded to close the door. Quick as a flash the young man wedged his foot in the door and pushed it wide open. “Don’t be too hasty!” He said. “Not until you have at least seen my demonstration.”

And with that, he emptied a bucket of horse manure on to her hallway carpet. “If this vacuum does not remove all traces of manure from your carpet, madam, I will personally eat the remainder.”

The old lady stepped back and said “well let me get you a fork, cause they cut off my electricity this morning.”

As St. Paul says in his letter to St. Timothy: The love of money is a root of all kinds of evil (1 Timothy 6:10). And the two unscrupulous businessmen in today’s reading from Acts are certainly proof of that: Luke tells us that they were not only enslaving a young woman for their own profit they were exploiting her mental and spiritual health to earn their money.

And their greed didn’t stop there – when she had been set free from the mental illness and spiritual bondage that created the situation that made them so much money they very piously lied and told the whole town that it wasn’t the money that worried them but the health and well-being of their community. In his commentary on this passage John Calvin had a nice turn of phrase about these two. He says, “though the enemies of Christ behave themselves wickedly and un-honestly, yet they always invent some cause for their sin.”

We can easily observe that this sort of economic exploitation in opposition to the gospel of Christ has continued through the centuries. From our own slave-owning ancestors, who used the Bible to justify their abuse of fellow human beings, to the modern corporations that continue to run sweat shops and try to dodge safety and health regulations, the world has always had a surplus of people willing to oppress, exploit, and abuse other people to make a buck.

One of the messages of the book of Acts is that the resurrection and ascension of Christ is a direct rebuke from God against economic injustice. In his Gospel Luke, more than the other Gospel writers, emphasizes Christ's concern for the poor and those being oppressed by unjust systems. Here in Acts – his sequel to that Gospel – Luke continues that theme by showing how the Church (all of us who follow Christ) is called through the Holy Spirit to continue Christ's ministry of speaking out against the kind of economic injustice we see in today's story. In Acts Luke shows how, through the power of Holy Spirit, we are called to continue in the footsteps of the apostles to break the chains of oppression and exploitation.

This is one of the reasons we read Acts during the Easter season. The book of Acts helps us answer the question "what difference does the resurrection make?" Christ's resurrection means the beginning of the end for economic injustice and the beginning of the end of people exploiting one another for monetary gain. Christ's resurrection means that the systems and societies of this world are now coming under God's judgment and the Church is being called to lead the way in challenging these unjust systems and working for a new and better world modeled on the justice, economics, and social structure of the Kingdom of God.

In short, the resurrection of Christ means that the life of the world to come – the life we've seen described in our Easter readings from Revelation – is beginning here and now. And the beginning of the life of the world to come is good news for all of us, just as it was good news for the slave girl set free in Philippi all those centuries ago. It's the good news that the world is beginning to change for the better and we can have hope that what is to come will be better than what has been.

Amen.