Message for Sunday, November 8, 2026
Scripture: Deuteronomy 15:1-11; Matthew 19:16-22
Title: Release

Welcome
Announcements: Giving Options-Special Offering Frontera de Cristo; Toys for Tots Collection Bin in Foyer; Bob in the sound booth is making name tags, stop by to have your picture taken; Thanksgiving Potluck, Middle school party, Interfaith workshops today at 2PM. Decorate the church for Christmas Monday, November 23 at 8:30 for hauling and 9:30AM for decorating.

Fellowship of Love
Song

Call to Worship
One: Through Moses, God said,
All: Let my people go. *(Ex. 9:1)*

One: In the scripture, the law declares:
All: In the seventy year you must cancel all debts. (*Deut 15:1)*

One: With grace, Jesus said:
All: Give one coat away. *(Luke 3: 11)*

One: With honesty Jesus taught:
All: Sell what you have, give money to the poor. *(Matt: 19:21)*

One: Faith has always involved letting go, releasing, setting free, dropping our nets, giving to others, and following.

All: So in this hour of worship, may we release that which binds us. May we worship with open, untamed, and porous hearts, so that we can walk freely with God.

One: Let it be so.
All: Amen.

Unison Prayer
All: Gracious God, We admit to holding tight to that which we know and understand. We put you in a box to avoid the shades of gray that come with faith.

We put worship in a box to avoid the discomfort of change.

We put ourselves in boxes labeled with gender expectations and societal norms.

We put others in boxes labeled "worthy" and "unworthy."

We put all that we have in a box and pray that we won't run out.

So in this moment, we confess to holding tight to fear, greed, and worldly structures. Forgive us for missing the point.

Open our eyes to a new way--

to a holiness found in open boxes, unclenched fists, shades of gray and holy release. Gratefully we pray, Amen.

L: As we come to this time of offering, let us remember that giving is an opportunity to respond to God's generosity with our own.

Offering/Song

Scripture: Deuteronomy 15:1-11 & Matthew 19:16-22
15 "Every seventh year you shall grant a remission of debts.

2 And this is the manner of the remission: every creditor shall remit the claim that is held against a neighbor, not exacting it, because the LORD's remission has been proclaimed.

3 Of a foreigner you may exact it, but you must remit your claim on whatever any member of your community owes you.

4 There will, however, be no one in need among you, because the LORD is sure to bless you in the land that the LORD your God is giving you as a possession to occupy,

5 if only you will obey the LORD your God by diligently observing this entire commandment that I command you today.

6 When the LORD your God has blessed you, as he promised you, you will
lend to many nations, but you will not borrow; you will rule over many
nations, but they will not rule over you.

7 “If there is among you anyone in need, a member of your community in
any of your towns within the land that the LORD your God is giving you, do
not be hard-hearted or tight-fisted toward your needy neighbor.

8 You should rather open your hand, willingly lending enough to meet the
need, whatever it may be.

9 Be careful that you do not entertain a mean thought, thinking, ‘The
seventh year, the year of remission, is near,’ and therefore view your needy
neighbor with hostility and give nothing; your neighbor might cry to the
LORD against you, and you would incur guilt.

10 Give liberally and be ungrudging when you do so, for on this account the
LORD your God will bless you in all your work and in all that you undertake.

11 Since there will never cease to be some in need on the earth, I therefore
command you, ‘Open your hand to the poor and needy neighbor in your
land.’
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16 Then someone came to him and said, “Teacher, what good deed must I
do to have eternal life?”

17 And he said to him, “Why do you ask me about what is good? There is
one who is good. If you wish to enter into life, keep the commandments.”

18 He said to him, “Which ones?” And Jesus said, “You shall not murder.
You shall not commit adultery. You shall not steal. You shall not bear false
witness.

19 Honor your father and mother. Also, you shall love your neighbor as
yourself.”

20 The young man said to him, “I have kept all these; what do I still lack?”

21 Jesus said to him, “If you wish to be perfect, go, sell your possessions, and give the money to the poor, and you will have treasure in heaven; then come, follow me.”

22 When the young man heard this word, he went away grieving, for he had many possessions.

Message: Release

This message hits at an interesting time for our culture. This past week was election week. Now this isn’t a Trump speech, and I know that many of you, like me, are tired of hearing political commercials, random text and phone calls related to voting. There’s something akin to voting that I want us to talk about today and that is our economic policy. I’m not going to get into the nitty gritty of the economy and our economic policy. Instead what I want to do is point us to a different way.

In Deuteronomy 15 we are introduced to a key concept that especially develops later in the New Testament. That is the concept of the year of Jubilee. The year of Jubilee is a year that is supposed to take place every seven years, when fields are left fallow, and all debts are forgiven. Our scripture from Deuteronomy today details this pretty well for us. Not only are we to forgive debts; we should also not be looking at when the year of Jubilee is coming up and intentionally not lend to someone so that we don’t lose out on our money. Instead we are to look at people in need and help them financially and rescue them from debt. It is an alternative economic system.

There is discussion amongst scholars about whether the year of Jubilee ever really happened. One reason they question this is that we don’t have any recorded evidence that it was ever actually practiced. I do know of a number of people who deal with people of Jewish faith who have experienced them practicing this idea of no debts every seven years. While I share the fact that we don’t have any direct evidence that the year of Jubilee ever happened I want to be careful of using that as a way to say that we shouldn’t follow a year of Jubilee. I’ve been around long enough to know that people really like to apply certain Old Testament verses, but this…forgiving debt on a national scale? No it doesn’t apply.

The problem with approaching this text in that manner is that the year of Jubilee factors heavily into Jesus' message about the kingdom of God. Freeing people from debt is a basic part of what Jesus believed and practiced. The last I checked we are to be practicing those things as well. In the United States there are 300-310 million citizens according to the U.S. Census Bureau. The United States has the largest economy on the planet at an estimated 32 trillion dollars in GDP (Gross Domestic Product). 41% of American adults that's roughly 107 million people are in medical debt. The average for medical debt is approximately 5-8,000 dollars with US households holding approximately 220 billion in debt over the country. 43% of us have student debt, with the total being somewhere around 1.86 trillion dollars. The average for student loan debt is almost 40,000 per person.

If you can't tell that math ain't mathin. Our scripture in Deuteronomy holds us to a different economic standard. One that says we shouldn't saddle anyone with crippling debt so that they are unable to provide for themselves or have to sell their futures just to live. All of that brings us to our New Testament passage of the rich young man.

This passage is familiar to most of us, but I want to point to a few things that fit with our reading of Deuteronomy. I think we can make a safe assumption here, that assumption is that the rich young man was following all the edicts of the Old Testament regarding finances. This would include the year of Jubilee. Here in this story the young man has the opposite cause, but the same problem as those who Deuteronomy is addressing. You see in Deuteronomy it is release from the prison of debt which is controlling a person's life. Here in this passage, there is something else that this young man needs to be released from and that is from the control of money.

Bear with me here. Debt is controlling much of Americans' lives. We have all gone through that and I think you need very little explanation from me for how controlling and crippling debt can be. But have you considered the other path? What about those who have too much money? In the United States there are approximately 989 billionaires. Collectively, they hold onto 8.4 trillion dollars in equity. This amount of billionaires' accounts for nearly 29% of all global wealth.

Wealth in and of itself is not evil. Just look at this scripture. Jesus doesn't condemn this person for being wealthy. Instead Jesus invites him

away from the tyranny of money. Many of the political decisions made in our country have noting to do with helping the average American. Instead what these decisions are for is for consolidating and protecting the wealth of the ones that already have the most money. These individuals can spend more money on politicians than you can ever afford, and most often the economic policy is put in place to protect them and their wealth. Instead of helping others what happens is they accumulate more wealth and it corrupts and harms them in the process.

Where does all of this leave all of us? Odd are most of us are in the debt category, not in the extremely wealthy category. In either category we end up in a prison of our own making, and we are called as followers of Jesus Christ to release people from those prisons. This may look like learning budgeting skills to avoid debt, as well as voting for fair practices to help instead of harm people. It may look like evaluating the wealth we have and examining why we are holding on to that wealth? In Deuteronomy God reminds us that everything we have is Gods and that because it is Gods we need to treat it as a way to care for and minister to others.

While we began our message about having an alternative economy I haven't offered any solutions for that pathway. What I am suggesting is that we don't have to be trapped in either place. We don't have to be trapped by debt, and we should approach debt as Christians differently. We don't have to be trapped by our wealth, where we try to hold on and protect what we have, so much so that we harm others and harm ourselves. Instead we can give. Give of ourselves, give of our wealth, and give of our love and understanding so that maybe the Kingdom of God may come upon this year as the year of Jubilee. Amen.

Invitation to Renew Baptism
Pastoral Prayer/The Lord's Prayer
Song
Benediction
Song