Grace, mercy, and peace be unto you from God our Father and from our Lord and Savior, Jesus Christ. Amen.

The text which serves as the basis for my message today is the Gospel lesson we heard just a few moments ago. Particularly, I would like to focus upon verses 16-21. Jesus tells the Parable of the Rich Fool and Jesus says: (3rd full paragraph in Gospel bulletin)

16 And he (Jesus) told them a parable, saying, “The land of a rich man produced plentifully, 17 and he thought to himself, ‘What shall I do, for I have nowhere to store my crops?’ 18 And he said, ‘I will do this: I will tear down my barns and build larger ones, and there I will store all my grain and my goods. 19 And I will say to my soul, “Soul, you have ample goods laid up for many years; relax, eat, drink, be merry.”’ 20 But God said to him, ‘Fool! This night your soul is required of you, and the things you have prepared, whose will they be?’ 21 So is the one who lays up treasure for himself and is not rich toward God.”

Here ends the text.

Introduction:
My good friends in Christ. As I studied all 3 Scripture readings for today... one word seems to summarize all 3... and that word is obstacles.

In the Old Testament reading for today we hear what the obstacles are in the path of mankind in general. Listen to this obstacle: “Vanity of vanities, says the Preacher,

vanity of vanities! All is vanity I hated all my toil in which I toil under the sun, seeing that I must leave it to the man who will come after me, and who knows whether he will be wise or a fool? Yet... he will be master of all for which I toiled and used my wisdom under the sun. This also is vanity” (Ecclesiastes 1:2, 2:18)

In the Epistle lesson we are told how are we to deal with those meaningless obstacles that prevent us from being fulfilled as God’s children? Paul writes these words: “2 Set your minds on things that are above, not on things that are on earth.”

And then we find ourselves in the words of the Gospel hearing Jesus tell the Parable about the Rich Fool. Once again we hear a story about a man who has spent his whole life accumulating riches, but then it is gone in an instant as his earthly life comes to an end. And Jesus says in summary of this parable: “This
night your soul is required of you, and the things you have prepared... whose will they be?'

Obstacles... they do stand in our path.

As we think on the Gospel lesson for today and center our thoughts around the word... obstacles... there are two points I would invite you to join with me in reflecting upon:

First: Obstacles to a full life on earth; and,
Second: Obstacles to a full life in Christ.

I. What are the obstacles in your path on this earth? If I were to ask you to think about that question for a few moments what are some of the thoughts that come to your mind? What are the obstacles in your path to a full life here on earth?

A. At first most of us might offer answers like...
   -- family obligations and relationships,
   -- work,
   -- financial obligations...

Those are all valid definitions of some of the obstacles that we have to our life on this earth.

B. But then we could move to a deeper level and say that behind all of these reasons there is basically one obstacle that stands between all of our relationships... and that obstacle is ourselves. When we take a look at our life...we realize that what stands in the way of our being all that God wants us to be... and a full life on this earth... there is no one to blame but ourselves.

For instance, in our relationships with others... we place tremendous expectations upon others.

In our family relationships or friendships... we can place huge expectations upon others. We expect them to
   -- listen to us and then...do what we want;
   -- love us and accept us, even with all our defects;
   -- and then... when things don’t go our way... we can easily get upset with others.

We can take that one word... expectations... and apply it to
   -- work
   -- finances or money
   -- even our worship life
(why didn’t that pastor pick a hymn that I like to sing in church...
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--why did that pastor preach on that verse in the Gospel… I wanted him to preach on a different verse…)

Expectations… they can crush…. in our earthly life.

And not only do obstacles get in our way to our earthly life…

But

II. There can also be…obstacles to our spiritual life… or our relationship with God.

Now, with that thought in mind I want to ask you to move your thoughts to an even deeper level… and that is for us as Christians the when we narrow all reasons to a bottom line…the obstacles that prevent us from being everything God wants us to be as His children… are sin and Satan.

My friends, Satan works fast and furious on our minds to convince us that if we want to be happy, then we need to accumulate. We need to accumulate… power… control… money… security… relationships, and on and on the list goes.

Satan works diligently to deceive our minds from what is truly important in life… God.

So… how do we keep what is truly important… truly important.

The truly important… our earthly life… and our spiritual life… need to be kept in balance.

How do we keep our relationship with Jesus Christ in a healthy balance?

- By doing exactly what you are doing this morning.
- By coming to church and worshipping Jesus Christ, we keep our lives in balance.
- By taking home one of those little “Portals of Prayer” pamphlets and spending time each day in devotion with God.
- By reading the Bible and praying on a daily basis we keep ourselves in a healthy balance with God.

My friends, if I were to ask each one of you to list what are the obstacles that stand in your way of a healthy relationship with Jesus Christ? What would you answer?
Each of us faces obstacles… to be all that God the Father wants us to be… we must keep our spiritual lives and our earthly lives in balance.

I would like to take a moment to address of Youth and Young People. Speaking on behalf of your parish… thank you for leading us and guiding us in worship today. I am personally very pleased that you were able to attend the National Youth Gathering. Our Synod’s National Youth Gatherings can be life changing events in lives.

You young people are going to face obstacles in your lives… that I didn’t face… or even your parents didn’t face.

You live in a world that constantly changes… and the obstacles are going to constantly change.

But there is one part of our life that never changes… and that is Jesus Christ.

As you grow in life… please remember this… your parish family here at Immanuel is always here for you. As you grow through life… when you face life changing events… and even life crushing events… please remember that your parish family will always be here for you.

When life tries to crush your earthly lives… and your spiritual lives… you can always come “home” to your parish.

When you walk through those doors and come into this Nave and Sanctuary… you are home. The church is not a place to hide from the world. Your church is a place for you to come… to be healed and strengthened… to live in the world. We will love you.. and send you back out into the world.

For all gathered here today… we will all face our own obstacles…

Praise be to God… for we come into this place to receive
  -- forgiveness
  -- strength to face those obstacles
  -- and the healing God alone can give.

Come, let us receive Christ in the blessed gift of communion… and go back out into the world… and victoriously face those obstacles. Amen.

Now may the peace of God, which surpasses all understanding, keep your hearts and minds through Christ Jesus. Amen.