



Sunday August 7, 2022  
Luke 12:32-40 (Ninth Sunday after Pentecost)

Ascension Lutheran Church  
Pastor Tony Acompañado

“Do not be afraid, little flock, for it is your Father’s good pleasure to give you the kingdom.” Truthfully, I don’t exactly know what to do with these words. As I’ve been reflecting on the current state of our world lately, I’ve been desperate to hear a promise of hope. I’ve needed to hear these words because the difficult reality of our current world is that fear and anxiety seem to increasingly shape our lives.

All we need do is look at the number of lost jobs, failed relationships, and difficult diagnoses in our lives and in the lives of people close to us. Along with that we’ve witnessed parade tragedies, mass shootings in schools and churches, senseless global wars, political division, environmental destruction, and a stubborn pandemic that just won’t go away.

We have a twenty-four-hour-a-day newsfeed aimed at inciting all kinds of fear in our lives – where fear-laden text scrolls across the bottom of our tv screens and flashes on our cell phones, while spam e-mails announce that we’re doomed if we don’t buy the right products right now.

We’re bombarded with political voices spewing divisive rhetoric inciting fear – especially a fear of others, most of whom we know little to nothing about. There’s fear of terrorism – both foreign and domestic, fear of an unpredictable economy and its effect on our financial stability, fear of climate change, unemployment, war, hunger, poverty, homelessness, disease and death. The effect these forms of fear have on our culture and our lives has been and is devastating. It’s impossible to escape. So, it’s easy to understand why people are living with fear and worry.

Because of all this, I think many of us have deep concerns and are asking questions like: How am I supposed to live in order to know that I’m safe and secure? Or what am I lacking that will provide the greatest level of security for me and those I love?

In the midst of these concerns and as we remain shaken by the fear inducing events that have and continue to take place around us we desperately need to hear the words Jesus is speaking in Luke’s gospel. Into our fear, and across centuries of human experience, Jesus offers an extraordinary word of comfort in an increasingly threatening world – precious words that can never be heard enough. “Do not be afraid, little flock, for it is your Father’s good pleasure to give you the kingdom.”

These words are some of my favorite words in Scripture because I believe that they are a perfect summary of the Gospel. These words provide the absolute assurance that we need to hear in order to counteract the many voices of doom surrounding us.

In this passage from Luke’s gospel, we hear with absolute certainty that God loves us as only a parent can love, and God has not only promised that we will belong to him forever – but Jesus emphasizes that it is God’s good pleasure to give us the kingdom. These words are the reassurance that what is seen is not all that is, and it is a reminder that the fears we encounter each day don’t need to have the final word in defining our lives.

Today’s Gospel challenges us with a simple test: Do we want to live lives of taking, or do we want to live lives of giving? The answer we give reveals the truth of our hearts and opens – or closes us to the blessings that God is prepared to give.

But neither receiving nor sharing is possible when our fear causes us to grasp so tightly to our earthly possessions and treasures. Fear motivates us to hold on tightly to what we have so that we can protect ourselves



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against what might happen. And too often fear leads us to believe that our treasures and wealth will protect us against some dark and terrible day.

Our human sinfulness encourages us to believe that giving will lead to hardship, scarcity, and desperation. However, the gospel promises that giving from what we have will make us mindful of the God who desires to bless, and ready to receive the gifts that God offers. The less we want to have, the less we need to have. And the less we need to have, the less we need to fear. The less we need to fear, the more we know that a life of giving allows us always to live, not on the brink of destruction, but on the brink of blessing.

Jesus reminds us that our earthly treasures can be destroyed and therefore are not ultimate. Earthly treasure is not where our true treasure is. Therefore, Jesus challenges us to go to that deeper place and examine what our hearts hold dear – what is truly ultimate. He challenges us to embrace the true treasure God desires to give us – a treasure that is everlasting – a treasure that does not fade or fail.

So, now, if we go back to the beginning then we'll see this phrase that's so easily overlooked changes everything. "Do not be afraid, little flock, for it is your Father's good pleasure to give you the kingdom." Did you catch that? God doesn't just want to give us some things. God doesn't just hope we do alright. Instead, God wants to give us the kingdom and all good things.

And so anchored by the promise that God wants to give us all good things, we can hear the commands in today's Scripture differently. God wants us not to be overcome by worries, or keeping our priorities straight, and not to be consumed by greed or love of those things that do not bring real happiness. Instead, God wants us to have and enjoy and share the abundant life that comes from authentic community and a right relationship with God and each other.

As for being on the lookout for the coming kingdom, Jesus doesn't want us to miss when God comes in ways that might surprise us – in generosity instead of accumulation, in community instead of looking out for ourselves, in vulnerability and relationship rather than in strength. Yet, even when we recognize that God's gracious motivation changes the way we hear these commands, we have to admit that they're still hard to keep. But why?

Maybe it's because so much of our lives are filled by demands both great and small: like the demand to accumulate more and more in exchange for a false sense of security. Or the demand to prove your worth day in and day out. Or the demand to worry about countless things because we've been convinced that we're always lacking something.

"Do not be afraid, little flock, for it is your Father's good pleasure to give you the kingdom." My friends, today's gospel message from Jesus is a gift intended to equip us to hear and believe and live into God's promise that God wants to give us the kingdom and all good things ... not eventually but here, now, and forever. And I don't know about you, but these are exactly the words of hope I needed to hear today. Thanks be to God! Amen.