

#39 15-16

Psalm 50:1-8, 22-23

Genesis 15:1-6

Hebrews 11:1-3, 8-16

Luke 12:32-40

Living On The Brink of Blessing

“Do not be afraid, little flock, for it is your Father’s good pleasure to give you the kingdom. Sell your possessions, and give alms. Make purses for yourselves that do not wear out, an unfailing treasure in heaven, where no thief comes near and no moth destroys. For where your treasure is, there your heart will be also. Be dressed for action and have your lamps lit; be like those who are waiting for their master to return from the wedding banquet, so that they may open the door for him as soon as he comes and knocks. Blessed are those slaves whom the master finds alert when he comes; truly I tell you, he will fasten his belt and have them sit down to eat, and he will come and serve them. If he comes during the middle of the night, or near dawn, and finds them so, blessed are those slaves. But know 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. You also must be ready, for the Son of Man is coming at an unexpected hour.”

It is perhaps needless to say, that we are all here today because we are exercising our Faith. Faith is defined in the Oxford online dictionary as: a complete trust or confidence in someone or something; or, a strong belief in God or in the doctrines of a religion, based on spiritual *apprehension* rather than proof. Now, *apprehension* is defined as: anxiety or fear that something bad or unpleasant will happen: or to understand or grasp. So, 2 possible understandings of faith can be: 1.) our religious based faith can be defined as a strong belief that something bad will happen ~ and therefore we need to be prepared; 2.) or a strong belief that we can live a life grasping for God. And our Gospel seems to bring both definitions out in theologians.

Some see this scripture as a warning that we better be constantly on guard and vigilant ~ You better be ready in case God comes and you are a lazy slave and not ready! And some see this as a guide to how to live a contented peaceful life based on blessings not on fear.

Those who interpret it as being a warning, must have overlooked all of Jesus’ other words, especially in this chapter of Luke, of how we should not worry! Living a life of faith ~ trusting our lives to God ~ means we can believe that regardless of what fearful things may happen in life, God will help us get through them, out of them, around them, whatever we need ! And we will not be at a loss of inspiration, or choices.

Fear happens. A lot. Sometimes it is a fear for ourselves. Sometimes a fear for those we love. And it is not easy to simply stop worrying. But one thing that is easy, and yet we often need help being reminded to do it, is to have faith. We can always stop worrying if we have something to replace it with, and for us Christians, it is faith in Christ.

Once we tune into his words, his spirit, his promises, his love, his grace ~ his blessings ~ it does become easier to not worry. He says, “Do not be afraid, little flock, for it is your Father’s good pleasure to give you the kingdom.” This certainly is not some fearful impression we are being given of God. It is a Father’s good pleasure . . . God wants to reward faith. And if I may put it

this way ~ it is in our human scientific design that those who worry less, trust more, believe in good things, they live longer, more productive, happier lives. Faith works! Believing in a loving God who takes pleasure in blessing us, works ~ and they seem like miracles ~ and maybe they are!

So, Jesus continues and says, "Sell your possessions, and give alms" store up your treasures in sacred places. Make your goals in life to be things that are religiously precious, because what you make to be your goals on earth ~ are what you will get ~ to a certain degree, and material things are not as valuable or permanent as the spiritual, or as our human relationships, or as all the good things that Faiths can do together.

Audrey L. S. West is adjunct professor of New Testament at the Lutheran School of Theology at Chicago and she wrote:

The passage challenges us with a simple test: Do we want to live lives of taking or giving? The answer reveals the truth of our hearts and opens (or closes) us to the blessings that God is prepared to give. The blessings offered are known most fully by those *who are no longer afraid of potential danger* . . .

The Gospel promises ... that giving from what we have will make us mindful of the God of blessing, and ready to receive the gifts that God offers.

The less we want to have, the less we need to have. *This fact is itself one of the blessings God offers, with compound interest.* 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*, where we can more readily hear the promise that the 'Son of Man is coming at an unexpected hour,' desiring not to punish but to bless.

So we are being asked today to look within ourselves and pay attention to what we are really believing and hoping for. Are we living our faith as a response to fear, or as a desire to know and experience the God who takes pleasure in blessing us? Are we living on the brink of destruction or blessing?

Once we know what our faith is based on, we can then rest, in the reassurance of our Epistle: "Now faith is the assurance of things hoped for, the conviction of things not seen . . . All of these died in faith without having received the promises, but from a distance they saw and greeted them." We can know, with practice, that what we do during our time on earth, will bring good things for the future. Just as Abraham did all he could in faith, and was blessed, yet he did not see the promised land - we, too, can live and work and love and care today for this church, and know that we are promised blessings.

We are living on the brink of blessings today. We are living on the brink of a new beginning. And we can continue in faith, or in fear. I believe we are living in faith as a family community, and this will make all the difference in our relationship with our Father and the world around us.

May the peace of God, which surpasses all understand be with us now and forevermore. Amen