

August 8, 2010

Scripture: Luke 12: 32-40

Sermon: "An Unexpected Hour"

We continue our journey through the summer months with the Gospel of Luke as our companion. And as I read this text, I was in agreement with Peter, wanting to ask Jesus, "Are you talking to me or to everyone else? Are you expecting me to follow this advice or are you giving to some other person?" As I read this text, I found myself in agreement with Peter and really wanting to say, "Jesus, are you crazy? Surely, you are not talking to me."

What do you mean sell all my possessions? And give to the poor? Then what am I supposed to live on? What do you mean store treasure up in heaven? What do you mean be dressed for action?

Surely, Jesus, this is a message for someone else, not me, today, here in Midway.

And Jesus responds by saying, "Yes, I did mean this message for you, here now and always. It is the basis of faith in God. Who is in control? Who has your future? Who do you trust?"

For us to be faithful to the text, we need to see what is going on around it. Last week, we heard the parable of the rich fool where Jesus challenges his followers to really think about where we put trust: In material items or in God?

And this is very important question for Jesus at this time because he knows what lies ahead. At this point, Jesus is heading to Jerusalem and he knows what awaits him. And it ain't going to be pretty.

so he is trying to prepare his followers to really think about what it means to be a follower of Jesus and how they are going to live this out in their lives. And so he pushes them, challenges them to really think about where does our trust lie? Who is in control? our possessions or our God?

And so this week, we get the follow up conversation to that parable and Jesus takes it one step farther. He tells them that it is not just possessions or money that can give us a sense of false security. It is also the false notion that we all try to maintain that we are in control. It is also the false notion that the Kingdom of God isn't coming for a really long time so we have time to prepare. That the Kingdom of God really is something that is in the future or something we will experience when we leave this world. Jesus is saying there are other things that lead us to believe that we have a pretty good relationship with God because, well, at least God is on our priority list. Just after family, after work, just after, we can all fill in the blanks.

in our lesson today, Jesus is reminding the disciples that it is not just possessions or money that can distract us from fully living out a whole relationship with God. There are other things that give us false security and hope, like worry, like anxiety, like trying to figure who is in and who is out, like constantly going over the details, trying to fix every problem. In the end, Jesus says, all those things really aren't what the Kingdom of God is all about or going to get you much more for your heavenly reward.

Jesus says, “Let’s start from the very beginning. Don’t be afraid. It gives God pleasure to give you God’s Kingdom, now, here, at this moment. So take a deep breath and think about what that means. We already have the Kingdom of God on earth as it is in heaven. We didn’t earn it. We didn’t balance the scales in our favor. We didn’t have the winning lottery ticket.

God has already given us the Kingdom here on earth as it is in heaven which means that God is in control, which means that we have been given a gift freely, which means that through this gift, we are freed, free from the pressures of rat races, free from the pressures of getting ahead, free from the pressures of thinking we need more. We are free because God has already given us everything that we need. We are free to celebrate and experience life as a gift freely given, gladly given by God who has known us from the beginning, who knows us still and who will know us for years to come.

God has already given us God’s Kingdom here on earth. We don’t have to wait to experience God’s goodness or grace or love at some later point. We can do that right now Which means we are free to trust and have faith because our God is good, our God is generous, our God is faithful and because we are free, we can become the people that God created us to be, a people who practice a faith that “frees us to be generous, a faith that enables us to leave anxiety behind, a faith that creates in [us] a confidence about a future secured not by human endeavors or achievements but by God” ’s grace alone.

Jesus is inviting us to live out a Kingdom is here now mentality in our lives and see the changes that come from this. He is inviting to realize that when we live like the Kingdom is happening now, that amazing things will happen all around us such as people being treated with dignity, that we realize that there is more than enough stuff to go around, that we realize there is no scarcity, that there is an abundance of grace in this world. And so we can celebrate our true treasure, the knowledge that God has claimed us and named, the knowledge that we are created in God’s image, the knowledge that God loved us so much that God gave his only Son. That’s why he says “where your treasure is, there your heart will be also. Because he knows that where we give our attention, where we give our focus, where we give our trust and sense of security, then that is the one thing that we respect, worship, care about, or lift up as the end all, be all thing!

That’s why he asks, “Where’s your treasure? Who is in control? Who holds your future? With last’s week parable of the rich fool and then this continued discourse, Jesus is challenging us to step back and see what our priorities really are, to see what we have turned into things that are false treasures, to step back and see what is preventing us from being fully in relationship with God.

He wants us to realize possessions, wealth, worry, anxiety have become hindrances to becoming the people that God created us to be. They become dangerous when they become where our hearts truly lie. And when that happens, we run the risk that our lives will or have become futile and meaningless. Jesus wants to know that all these things are of this world and that when we try to use them to secure our future, they really are incapable of helping us or renewing us or reviving us or making us whole once more.

And because they do nothing for us, we experience nothing, and we become do nothing people. But the Good News is that is not true or what we've experienced about our God. Our God is a God that is so full of grace and goodness that God has already given us the Kingdom of God here on earth. We know that we worship and have experienced a great, doing something God. And because of that, we become a doing something kind of people. We become the people that God created us to be.

By continuing to challenge the people who are his followers then and now, Jesus is reminding that God loves us fully, completely, wholly and doesn't just give us scrapes from the table. God doesn't say, Oh, here is a little taste for now, You'll get more later or when I think you are ready. Jesus says No, God has given you the Kingdom, the main meal, the whole kit and caboodle! Jesus says, we don't worship a leftover kind of God. We worship a God whose love knows no end, whose grace is immeasurable, whose justice does not end. We worship a God who has blessed us with abundance and then says, Go and do likewise.

The Good News is that we don't have to live our lives in fear. God has already given us the Kingdom. God has already given us the treasure. God has already blessed us through his grace and his love.

And now Jesus wants to know how will we respond? And we answer that we will live our lives as celebrated, treasured children of God by opening our hearts and our minds to God's life changing love and grace and sharing those things with others. We will proclaim that God is our treasure and through this amazing gift, we will work and participate in the Kingdom of God now. We will respond by saying that we will come and take part of the main meal: the Word of God for us, that we will pursue ideals that will not wear out like grace, like love, like community, like acceptance. We will respond by saying we are already living out the Kingdom is here mentality here, now so that when the day comes when God's Kingdom is actually realized here on earth fully, we are already ready.

When the world asks us who is in control, when the world asks us where are our priorities, when the world asks us who holds our future, we will gladly proclaim: God does and God's Kingdom is here. And we worship a God that is great and is doing some amazing things here on earth as in heaven.

May we always live our lives as treasures from God and know that God is in control. Amen.