

Trinity Lutheran Church
10 August 2025
(Ninth Sunday after Pentecost)

Luke 12:32-48

32 Jesus said, Do not be afraid, little flock, for it is your Father's good pleasure to give you the kingdom. 33 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. 34 For where your treasure is, there your heart will be also. 35 Be dressed for action and have your lamps lit; 36 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.

37 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. 38 If he comes during the middle of the night, or near dawn, and finds them so, blessed are those slaves.

39 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. 40 You also must be ready, for the Son of Man is coming at an unexpected hour."

Jesus says in today's gospel text, "*Do not be afraid, little flock, for it is your Father's good pleasure to give you the kingdom.*" Did you hear that? Just looking at the news lately and I'm telling you, there's much to be afraid of! Starvation in Gaza, and it's worse in Sudan (which everyone outside of that country seems willing to ignore) the war in Ukraine is not only brutal but it is threatening the world order, then there's the effects of climate change with rising temperatures, more extreme flooding and droughts, and this last week we're beginning to hear about out-of-control wildfires—all of which are projected to get more extreme year after year. Add to all this the uncertainty in the economy that's said to be associated with tariffs.

No thanks to the internet and 24 hour news coverage we are constantly bombarded with an endless parade of stories and issues that make us fearful, not hopeful. Yes, no question about it, we are inundated daily, hour by hour, by such stories. There **is** much to fear.

Yet today as we gather we hear Jesus saying, "Do not be afraid?"

But given the litany of recent national and international events how can we **not** be afraid? How can we take our Lord's words seriously? After all, Jesus never had to deal with the effects of climate change or international relationships between nuclear super powers. He fed hungry people but was not confronted with millions of people on the brink of death by starvation. We are living in a different time and place in history.

I remember a few short years ago a governor of a state (I forget which state) approached a podium to speak shortly after another mass shooting in his state, only to be drowned out by the crowd chanting, "do something, do something, do something". I think we can all identify with that sentiment, that feeling of helpless and frustration.

Have Jesus's words—then—spoken over two thousand years ago, now become obsolete and no longer relevant?

Some have drawn that conclusion...but I believe that line of reasoning is too simplistic and reaches the wrong conclusion. In fact we need to hear these words of Jesus again and again. We need to embrace them, believe them, live them, and proclaim them now more than ever before. The church has a clear witness that it is compelled to share with others...that in the midst of uncertainty, despair, and fear, there is a sure and persistent hope. Our Christian faith pulls us away from living in fear to embracing a love that casts out fear. The grace that God in his mercy has bestowed upon us is a ray of hope in an otherwise uncertain and fear-filled world.

Yes, of course it is true that Jesus never had to confront gun violence or the potential for nuclear conflict...but the Roman Empire of his day was a very violent place and in that regard it wasn't much different than our own. He didn't face climate change but did endure extreme weather conditions. He didn't face a pandemic but medicine was primitive and illness was everywhere.

When Jesus uttered the words we read this morning to his disciples they were making their way to Jerusalem. It was no secret to any of them that Jesus had powerful enemies in the city who were intent on doing him harm. Jesus himself told them that he would physically suffer be put to death there. They were well aware of the fact that once they entered the city things could easily change and quickly turn violent. And indeed, they did.

They knew that once in the city they could get caught up in a situation that was not of their making and totally beyond their control. Jesus told his disciples at least three different times that in Jerusalem he would suffer and die. How much of that information his disciples could comprehend we just don't know but the

closer they came to Jerusalem the more their fear increased as they sensed that this trip to Jerusalem would not end well.

This is the context for today's gospel reading. Jesus told them, "*Do not fear*". Why did he say this? Because he knew they were filled with fear and anxiety. They had much to fear. What was to become of them if Jesus was in-prisoned or even worse, killed? Of course they were afraid as they accompanied Jesus to Jerusalem and Jesus's exhortation not to fear must have seemed to them to be as out-of-place in their fear-filled situation as it is in our own.

Jesus responds to their fear by assuring them that while **they** are helpless **God is not**. In fact God is busy doing something, he is working on their behalf. They may not be aware of it...but God is eager. Jesus says, it is God's good pleasure, to give them, to give us, the kingdom. In other words, even in the midst of the horrible events that were unfolding, where the future looked frightening, chaotic, and deeply troubling, God the father is taking pleasure in giving them the kingdom. God is active, and active on our behalf, even in these very uncertain times. He stands right here with us. In our sorrow, in our anger, in our feelings of sure frustration and helplessness. Jesus reminds us that God does not run away when things appear to be falling apart. Instead God stays with us in our despair and calls us to faithfully bear witness to the reality that God, not fear and not chaos, is ultimately in charge of the future no matter how dark the clouds may appear today.

So, as Christians what is our response to the evil we see permeating our world, our nation and our community? "Do not fear". How is that even possible? Well, Jesus tells us time and time again that **it's not possible** when we raise up barriers and seek to isolate ourselves from others who are different from us and undesirable. But **it is possible** by living a life of trust in God's providence. For when we trust God to meet our needs we are generous with what he has given us...and when we are generous our sharing with one another brings us closer together and breaks the bonds of loneliness, isolation, or desperation that we or others may be experiencing. Yes, if I use my imagination I can see you and I, making a difference by living our faith, by sharing what we have so that God's kingdom, which he has promised us, will be shared with others...especially those who are marginalized in our society or in the greatest need.

This past week I had a doctor's appointment in Bethesda, MD. Driving there took a while but was no problem. Driving back however I was in the middle of rush hour traffic. 20 miles an hour, bumper to bumper traffic. I ended up tuning the radio from one station to another to find anything even mildly interesting. I came across the middle of an author being interviewed. I can't remember her name and I was driving so I couldn't write it down. This author who was being

interviewed was talking about some awful decisions she made growing up. Her mother kicked her out of the house when she turned 18. As a woman in her early 20's she found herself broke, addicted to drugs and alcoholic, single, and very much alone. She doesn't remember exactly how it happened but she began attending a church in her neighborhood. Everyone in that church was black. She recalls feeling awkward and out of place as the only white person there. A few weeks went by and she discovered she was pregnant. Somehow she found the courage to confide in another woman at the church that she was pregnant. As she tells it, to her utter shock this woman wasted no time in announcing to the entire congregation the content of their private conversation. Totally embarrassed she was expecting to hear a collective gasp followed by silent condemnation but what happened instead is that everyone stood up and erupted in applause, eagerly congratulating her. They wasted no time making sure she had things like; food, clothes, and most importantly the assurance that her baby was going to be a part of the church family. She recounts that this acceptance changed her whole outlook on life.

From that day on church members began slipping her money. She spoke about how many of the older women, living close to the bone and on food stamps, would saddle up to her on the pew and stuff bills into her purse or into her pocket. She recounts, "It was always done so stealthily. If you were an outsider you might think they were slipping me cocaine." She recalls one woman by the name of Mary Williams was a regular donor, and every week would give her plastic baggies full of dimes. Sometimes only two or three dimes and at other times as many as 150 or more, but always something.

She recounts that at the time she really needed the financial help and quickly got over her embarrassment at receiving these gifts. A few years later her writing career took off and she moved out of that neighborhood. She missed her old friends there and made it a point to return to the church to see her old friends. When she did Mary Williams was there and she discreetly slipped a baggie full of dimes into the author's purse. When the author discovered this she was embarrassed and approaching Mary Williams told her that she no longer needed her money. "You shouldn't be embarrassed" Mary told her, "I'm not giving you the money because I think you need it. I'm giving it to you because God has blessed me and it blesses me to give it away."

The point I see in all this is that Mary Williams had learned how, in the midst of hardship, not to worry. She had nothing to fear because she was confident that God would always find a way to give her enough.

Jesus is telling us to take stock of what we value. Jesus says, "*Do not fear*" and then follows this up by saying, "*where your treasure is there is where you will find*

your heart". You see, **fear** and **what we treasure** are connected. If we treasure temporal things our heart will forever be in turmoil, in bondage, enslaved to those things that have no lasting value. Not only that but our hearts will be filled with fear that we may lose what we have or that we will never be able to achieve what we spend our time and energy trying to obtain.

When we let go of the things we cling to so anxiously, and in its place share who we are and what we have with others, like Mary Williams sharing her dimes: we too can live without being anxious, without fear. This kind of sharing is not just an imitation of God, but it's a sign of our participation in the very life of God and the kingdom that he has promised. It is an expression of self-giving love, a love void of fear that spills over to others. AMEN.