

## Sermon Notes August 7<sup>th</sup>, 2022

Sermon Text: Luke 12:32-40

We are coming to the close of chapter twelve and we are well on our way in the travel narrative. Yes, there is still a very long journey ahead of us but we are three chapters in and we have experienced a lot.

In the travel narrative, Jesus coins many popular phrases. Now, at the time, it was him simply teaching his disciples and those following. However, over the centuries, individuals have picked out the phrases and put them in books and even made them into bumper stickers and have slapped them on their cars.

One of those statements kicks off the nine verses that we read today. *“Do not fear.”* This is one of the instances where the lectionary does not give us a full picture of what is happening in the full context of their travels. The words, do not fear, makes more sense when you read it in connection with the previous verses. Do not fear is verse thirty-two, allow me to read the previous three verses and verse thirty-two and I think it will not only make more sense, but it will set the stage for our full text that was given to us today. Here we go, listen into these very important words via ‘The Message’.

“What I’m trying to do here is get you to relax, not be so preoccupied with getting so you can respond to God’s giving. People who don’t know God and the way he works fuss over these things, but you know both God and how he works. Steep yourself in God-reality, God-initiative, God-provisions. You’ll find all your everyday human concerns will be met. Don’t be afraid of missing out. You’re my dearest friends! The Father wants to give you the very kingdom itself.

Now, if you are familiar with the full context, Jesus has just finished pointing to the skies and the fields. He was sharing that if God cares for the ravens in the skies and the lilies in the fields; God most certainly will take care of you. God’s faithfulness extends to all of their creation. If we allow them, those three words can continue to impress, inspire, uphold and matter to us.

Now, here is where the passage can overwhelm us. There is quite a bit of action that is packed in the next eight verses. In my studies, there was a pattern that kept coming to the forefront and the pattern is the following:

- 1) Fear
- 2) Treasure
- 3) Being Prepared

I believe that there is a reason or meaning behind the order as well. This specific order can help us realize what a life of faith may look like for us today.

Fear is where it starts. Jesus wants his disciples to release their fear. With the fear being release, you can now replace that fear with the promises of God’s kingdom. The promises of God’s kingdom is what brings us our treasures and more importantly gives us the understanding that the treasures are not necessarily earthly ones.

Karoline Lewis says that if we led with treasures, we might lean heavily into the three A’s. Her three “A’s” are achievements, acquisitions, and assets. If we are honest with ourselves, we see those three “a’s” quite frequently in our culture today. She continues with two more alliterations. One is with the letter “P” and the other is with the word “self”. She states, “when the lack of fear precedes our fear-driven desires for (1) possessions, (2) purchases, and (3) procurements we might actually be able to imagine treasures beyond (1) self-driven determination, self-assessed success, and (3) self-obsessed security.

I sat with that sentence for a bit this week and it really was powerful and I am still wrestling with how it can help me make changes in the way that I think and live out my faith.

With fear and treasures being in place, we are able to meditate on what it means to being prepared. This can be difficult for us. I mean, it has been two-thousand years and yet we still wait. I think that it would benefit us greatly if we shift away from time. Instead of thinking about it as an actual time, can we move our thinking into being imaginative about the activity that Jesus is doing in the world? Then, can we take another step and see where God is working where we least expect God to be working.

As they were traveling I think that Jesus was sharing with them that waiting is simply not going to cut it. I think that is extremely true for us today. I think we wait way too much.

Going back to what we started with, (1) fear (2) treasure, and (3) being prepared, let's lean back into Karoline when she says, "being without fear, knowing the source of your treasure is what makes it possible to be prepared and with that; we can be an actual participant in God's kingdom.

Participation in God's kingdom includes both what happens inside these walls and what happens outside these walls. Yes, we as a church should be "doing" ministry outside of the walls, but remember the church is all of us and so each one of us can and does participate in the community.

Over the last few weeks and in the up-coming weeks, we have been trying to shine some light on those areas and it will continue. For example, a few weeks ago, the service board asked the question about where do you serve or participate in volunteer work in Door County. We had thirty-three organizations that were lifted up. We can celebrate those areas of service. The mission board on service will be highlighting some of these organizations in the near future, so keep your eye on that.

Then, we have highlighted our mission boards. Once again, we have ten boards that you can serve on. The list of the boards and their very brief highlight statement is on the pamphlet and that pamphlet is on the back table. Then, we have a one sheet ministry description for each board if you want to see exactly what their responsibilities are if you want to take a look at before joining.

Last week, the Mission Board of Stewardship met and, in our conversation, we did talk about treasures (money), but we also talked about time and talents. In the near future, you are going to see opportunities to use your time and talent. The board and individuals in the church have shared that they were unaware of all the ways to connect with one another and the church community and the possibility of jumping in on a one-time service project. Hopefully, this will be a useful tool that can help you live out our baptismal promise that states that we will "*serve all people following the example of Jesus.*"

With me sharing with you about the mission board of stewardship, let me lean into verse thirty-three as I try to wrap up the sermon. Here is verse thirty-three: "*Be generous. Give to the poor. Get yourselves a bank that can't go bankrupt, a bank in heaven far from bank robbers, safe from embezzlers, a bank you can bank on. It's obvious, isn't it?*"

In the NRSV, the language is giving alms. Almsgiving is not necessarily about trying to eliminate poverty. Instead it is about focusing on lifting up generosity as a mark of the Christian life. Jesus is sharing with us that it is our faith that allows and promotes generosity. Speaking of generosity, our God is beyond generous and our lives are anchored in the gospel promise that God's good pleasure is to give us the kingdom.

It is scary times. Many of us are afraid. There is uncertainty all around us. We can rest in God's promises.

May I close with a quote from Nelson Mandel. In 1994, he was giving his opening speech as the first democratically elected State President of South Africa and he said:

*"Our deepest fear is not that we are inadequate. Our deepest fear is that we are powerful beyond measure. It is our light, not our darkness, that frightens us most. We ask ourselves, 'Who am I to be brilliant, gorgeous, talented, and famous?' Actually, who are you not to be? You are a child of God. Your playing small does not serve the world. There is nothing enlightened about shrinking so that people won't feel insecure around you. We were born to make manifest the glory of God that is within us. It's not just in some of us; it's in all of us. And when we let our own light shine, we unconsciously give other people permission to do the same. As we are liberated from our own fear, our presence automatically liberates others."*

Friends, may we have the courage to release our fear. **AMEN**