

“Living Light”

Luke 12: 29-34

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²⁹And do not keep striving for what you are to eat and what you are to drink, and do not keep worrying. ³⁰For it is the nations of the world that strive after all these things, and your Father knows that you need them. Luke12:29-30

Dear God, Easier said than done God! Have you seen my life lately! People need so much: my family, my work, my school, my friends. God I need a few things myself if you haven't noticed! My friend is really sick, will he ever be whole. My neighbor is suffering from great anxiety and she needs someone just to talk to. My dog needs to be walked! And you know that refrigerator that freezes everything in the fresh drawer bin? I think fresh drawer means fresh not frozen. And God if you haven't noticed lately, I feel like I am fraying around the edges. But I guess you already know all these things! Sorry to bother you but, Thanks for listening! Have a great day! Just me! Oh by the way, it's only 10:30 here so I am sure I will need to talk with you later!

Many of us live with the oppressiveness of measuring –up that keeps us weighed down. As a society, Americans on average are now living in three times more home space than in the 1950's. And no matter how much more space we live in, we tend to fill it up. In fact, we now have a 2.2 billion square foot personal storage industry. Cheap labor, 24/7 access to online ordering and instant gratification have contributed to as insensitivity to the amount of stuff we have and the rate of speed we turn over the stuff we have. Even our lives are weighed down with shoulds and expectations that hold us captive to the frantic pace we live and mounting debt we accumulate. Jesus invites us in our gospel to find freedom in a less crowded way to live.

According to Luke, Jesus is on the road to Jerusalem, teaching his disciples - and occasionally the crowds he attracts - along the way. After sharing the parable of the rich fool, Jesus urged his disciples to dwell on no earthly concerns: *"Therefore I tell you, do not worry about your life, what you will eat, or about your body, what you will wear...Instead, strive for God's kingdom and these things will be given to you as well."* (12:22-23, 31). In today's passage, and in light of such faith and trust, Jesus invites them to give all they have away and to look for Christ's imminent return.

What do you mean Jesus! Aren't you the king that has come to save us! Aren't you the one who will rid of this tyrannical rule and give us all that we need, even desire? Aren't you the one who will return us to the glory days of power and supplying our need?

"Do not be afraid, little flock, for it is your Father's good pleasure to give you the kingdom." "Do not be afraid" is the hallmark of good news through Scripture and occurs multiple times in Luke's story of Jesus. Typically, "Do not be afraid," is the prelude to the announcement of God's mighty and saving deeds. It is the starting point and anchor for everything else in this passage. It is God's good pleasure - God's intention, plan, and delight - to give you the kingdom! If this is true, then disciples can, indeed, resist the seduction of wealth, not fall prey to constant anxiety about worldly needs, share what they have with others, and wait expectantly, even eagerly, for the coming of the Messiah. Disciples are you and I!

“Do not be afraid, little flock, it is your Father’s good pleasure to give you all things.” And from that astounding promise comes the invitation, to prioritize, to share, to be prepared for what comes, to give things away. It’s not a demand folks, it’s an invitation. The difference is in the force of how this statement strikes you. The one implies coercion; the other freedom. And promises always lead to freedom. Because we have Jesus’ promise that it is God’s good pleasure and heart’s desire to give us all good things, we are suddenly free to give away, to care for others, to lose ourselves in service, and in all these ways find our security and confidence not in our earthly possessions or accomplishments but rather in our relationship with God.

This changes everything! It's one thing for someone just to demand things of you, it's another when that person is a parent who you know only wants what is best for you. Intention, attitude, relationship -- these things make a difference. Anchored by the promise that God wants to give us all good things, we can hear these commands differently. God wants us not to be overcome by worries, to keep our priorities straight, to not be consumed by greed or love of those things that do not bring real happiness. Rather, God wants us to have and enjoy and share the abundant life that comes from genuine community and 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. It's easy to miss the God who comes in love and grace, you see, when all we expect is law and punishment. 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. Why?

Maybe it's because so much of the rest of our lives are filled by demands both great and small: like the demand to accumulate 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 innumerable things because we have been convinced that we are always at risk. In this kind of climate, it's hard to trust God's promises and give over our worries and live more fully and generously. Yet this is the very thing God invites us too!

As I come to my prayer chair each week, I pray for you and I trust that you pray for one another. As we begin to frame our conversation with God in our head, remember, the promise that God wants to give us all good things! In having all good things, God helps us live more fully and abundantly. Knowing that the culture we live in works against God's promises, as God's community we must be in a place where we can be encouraged in our faith and equipped to receive and live the abundant life. Martin Luther once described the church as a place of "conversation and consolation of the faithful." Let's live into that vision more fully.

In your bulletin is a 3x5 card and I would like you to take that card out right now! One side of the card write: "God wants to give you all good things" and on the other side of the card I want you to offer one fear or worry or concern you are willing to share. No names necessary. I am going to ask you to put those cards in the offering plate and the ushers will remove the cards so that on your way out you will take another's concern and simply pray for whomever wrote the card you receive. You don't need to know who it is, just that it's a fellow member of the body of Christ who has this concern. As you are praying for that person, you also know that someone is praying for you. And you realize that you are not alone. We all have the promise that God wants to give us the kingdom; we all have trouble remembering and acting on that promise; we all are praying for and supporting each other.

In praying for one another may God 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 right now, right here.