

The Twelfth Sunday of Pentecost

August 7, 2016

Prayer of the Day: Almighty and everlasting God, you are always more ready to hear than we to pray, and to give more than we either desire or deserve. Pour upon us the abundance of your mercy, forgiving us those things of which our conscience is afraid, and giving us those good things for which we are not worthy to ask, except through the merits and mediation of your Son, Jesus Christ our Lord, who lives and reigns with you and the Holy Spirit, one God, now and forever.

Verse of the Day: Alleluia! Now faith is being sure of what we hope for and certain of what we do not see. Alleluia! (Hebrews 11:1)

Sermon Text: Luke 12:32-40

How is your life going? I know that is a very generic, very wide open question. I am sure if I asked you that same question after service, you would probably give me a generic: "Good." "Okay." "Fine." (Maybe those are the answers floating through your mind right now). But how are you really doing? You do not have to share your feelings out loud. Keep your answers in your mind; no one can hear your thoughts, but be honest with yourself. Find a few concrete words that vividly characterize your life. Has your original answer changed? Is your life still "good," "okay," "fine?" Or is life more: "Uncertain of the future?" "Depressingly unclear?" "Complex and challenging?" "Seemingly hopeless?"

Perhaps deep down inside you are at ease. If so, then great! You defy the feelings of an overwhelming majority of Americans. A 2014 *Washington Post* poll found that 76 percent of Americans do not believe life for their children's generation will be better. (https://www.washingtonpost.com/opinions/dana-milbank-americans-optimism-is-dying/2014/08/12/f81808d8-224c-11e4-8593-da634b334390_story.html)

Luke 12:32-40

³² "Do not be afraid, little flock, for your Father has been pleased to give you the kingdom. ³³ Sell your possessions and give to the poor. Provide purses for yourselves that will not wear out, a treasure in heaven that will not be exhausted, where no thief comes near and no moth destroys. ³⁴ For where your treasure is, there your heart will be also.

³⁵ "Be dressed ready for service and keep your lamps burning, ³⁶ like men waiting for their master to return from a wedding banquet, so that when he comes and knocks they can immediately open the door for him. ³⁷ It will be good for those servants whose master finds them watching when he comes. I tell you the truth, he will dress himself to serve, will have them recline at the table and will come and wait on them. ³⁸ It will be good for those servants whose master finds them ready, even if he comes in the second or third watch of the night. ³⁹ But understand 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, because the Son of Man will come at an hour when you do not expect him."

It goes on to write: *The wealthy were as down as the poor (75 percent and 73 percent, respectively) and even those who felt that they were doing well personally didn't think their children would do as well (61 percent). Women are as grim as men, and there's little difference according to race (whites are slightly more pessimistic and Hispanics slightly less) ... The young are relatively less pessimistic than the old (64 percent to 86 percent) but still plenty discouraged in absolute terms. Republicans (88 percent) were more dour than Democrats (61 percent), just as Democrats were more dour than Republicans when the question was asked in 2006...*

So, it does not matter your age, job, political ideology, race, or gender— people in America have a more pessimistic view on life than ever before. (If you are wondering, the poll started in 1942. American optimism has been declining since 1942— even though the 1950s, late 1980s, and early 1990s brought tremendous economic growth, technological improvements, and strong leadership).

The results of this poll reveal something interesting in your world: People are searching for lasting happiness, but cannot find it. The money they make and technology in their life and the leaders of their nation cannot guarantee that life will be better. A majority sees the troubles today and lives certain that life is only to get worse.

Maybe your eyes lead you to think the same thing. Today, you get the opportunity to look through Jesus' eyes and see what the present and the future holds. **FEAR NOT, LITTLE FLOCK!** *for the kingdom is already yours and by faith you live for it.*

Yet, does Jesus even know who he is talking to? He is speaking to his disciples— people who expect him to make life better. Yet, they do not see any improvements. The oppressive Roman government still squeezes them for more tax money. Their Roman emperors care only about their own self-interests (and not about the needs of the people). The disciples are not rich; they toil and labor just to afford the food, drink, and clothing they so dearly need. The little money they do have can become something precious; their hearts can cling to it! ([Luke 12:1-31](#)) These are the things the disciples experience, touch, feel, and see every single day.

What they do not see is Jesus actually making life better. Remember, the Jewish nation wants to make Jesus their earthly king ([John 6:15](#)). His inspiring teachings make him a prime candidate to lead. He can silence critics. People respect his authority. All Jesus has to do is say the word and the Jews will rally around him. Together they can drive out the oppressive Roman army and set up a people-friendly government. Jesus can daily fill their cupboards with bread and drink. With Jesus as earthly King, they will never again live in fear. They will have the guarantee life will be better for their children!

He does not do that, does he? Jesus is never crowned king. He does not overthrow the Roman Empire. He does not toss bread into outstretched hands.

So, what does Jesus do? Because you and I still see trouble in life— and our troubles may involve more than food and money. We listen to God's Word. Our words and actions reflect what his Word says. That does not always make life so pleasant, does it? Your society daily pressures you to change your Bible-based beliefs of marriage and abortion to

match its secular views. You share God's good news of forgiveness to weary souls, but you are viciously rejected and insulted. You seek comfort from your fellow believers here, but your eyes cannot help but remember old familiar faces that used to sit by you, but no longer do. You want more people to worship with you, but never see them. The things you experience as a Christian are not always so pleasant, are they? Sometimes it really just does not seem worth following Jesus any longer. Because based on what you see, it does not look like the present— or the future— will be any better.

My dear friends, is that not really the problem? Basing the reality of our faith on what we see? God defines faith as *being sure of what we hope for and certain of what we do not see* ([Hebrews 11:1](#)). How often we see fears in our Christian life, but do not see in the Bible what God does about these fears!

Faith trusts the promises of God. Faith takes God at his Word. Yet, if we do not read the Bible and see what God promises us, we will grow sad, pessimistic, and fearful of our future! Why? Because we will judge God's power by what we want to see happen. If we do not see happiness in our Christian life, then we could conclude that God offers us nothing! If God appears to offer us nothing, then our trust in him shrinks! If our trust in him shrinks, our hearts will search for treasures without God. If that happens, then we can lose our inheritance in the kingdom of God!

Look to the Word. See God offer you something— something that grants true, lasting satisfaction. **“Do not be afraid, little flock, for your Father has been pleased to give you the kingdom.”** Did you catch the reason not to fear? You do not go through life alone! The troubles you see are not ignored by God! Your Father knows where your life is heading! He points you to heaven and tells you that heaven is already your home!

Money, leaders, and age are considered treasures by many. Yet, according to that *Washington Post* poll, these so-called “treasures” people see have not provided true, lasting happiness. They disappoint; they fail; they do not offer what people search for.

Your hearts have latched on to a far more lasting Treasure— a Treasure sent down from heaven by God. People have seen your Treasure live the perfect life so many crave. People have seen your Treasure satisfy the anger of God on your behalf. People have seen your Treasure die and then rise from the dead. People have seen your Treasure stand before their very eyes alive and proclaim peace between God and you! ([John 20:19](#)) People have seen your Treasure enter into heaven so that he can prepare a place for you. These “people” are your fellow believers who saw Jesus, your Treasure. They wrote down the things they saw and the words they heard in the Bible. They recorded the hope, joy, and peace they received from Jesus so that you can receive that same hope, joy, and peace. **FEAR NOT, LITTLE FLOCK!** *for the kingdom is already yours and by faith you live for it.*

That is why you are here, right? Because you trust in things unseen. You know heaven exists, even though you have not seen it with your own eyes. You know Jesus' promise is as good as done. This is what faith is: *faith is being sure of what we hope for and certain of what we do not see* ([Hebrews 11:1](#)).

Sometimes people ask me what I see on Sunday mornings here. I assume the reason for the question comes from the fact that masses are not breaking down the doors to be here. So, to you, it can look like the future will not get any better.

Do you want to know what I really, truly see here? I see you, a little flock, who has no fear. You do not fear that you have failed to earn the love of God this week. You do not fear that Jesus will take away your forgiveness because you failed to be a good enough person. You have heard that God loved you so much that he stepped in, sent his Son to the cross, washed you and purified you from all sin, and has freely given you eternal life. The only real thing you have to fear is now removed; Jesus has removed your fear of death in hell.

I see this little flock who gathers around a banquet table that their Savior has prepared for them. There he fills your heart with his Word. He strengthens you with the forgiveness that comes from the Sacraments of Baptism and Holy Communion. He places a glimmering jewel-encrusted crown on your head, and calls you a citizen of heaven—the greatest nation the universe has ever seen! I see a flock, which looks insignificant in this world. I see a flock that could easily be crushed by many evil forces. Yet, I see a flock guided by God—a God who has given you nothing to fear in life. He is with you! Heaven is your home! *By faith you live for it.*

I see a little flock that **Sells your possessions and gives to the poor**. No, not that you sell everything you own. Rather, if you sell clothing, you feel no loss. If you give money to those in need, you have lost nothing. You do not find lasting happiness in the possessions of this world. You have knit together **a purse for yourself that will not wear out, a treasure in heaven that will not be exhausted, where no thief comes near and no moth destroys**. Moths can destroy clothing, but will never eat away at your faith. Thieves may steal money, but will never snag away your faith.

Your treasure is stored up in heaven—and you know that. Just like Abraham did. Every day he woke up—and yes, he tended to his cattle, his tents, and hundreds of servants. Yes, he lived in a world that was not perfect. Yes, he did not grow numb or ignore his own troubles. Yet, he set his sights on what life is all about. He walked with God to reach his heavenly home.

So, how is your life really going? “Good?” “Okay?” “Fine?” Or is life more: “Uncertain of the future?” “Depressingly unclear?” “Complex and challenging?” “Seemingly hopeless?”

Look and see what God has done to give you lasting happiness. He has not set your lasting treasure in your job, political ideology, race, or gender. No, he has already given you a heavenly home. Each day you get to wake up and remember that. You get to remember that God sent you Jesus to make this all a reality.

Every day you step closer to that heavenly goal. Continue spending time in God’s Word, reading his promises and praising him for the love he continually pours out on you. Even in the face of life’s challenges, look through Jesus’ eyes and see what the present and the future holds. **FEAR NOT, LITTLE FLOCK!** *for the kingdom is already yours and by faith you live for it.*