

Sermon for 8/11/13

Genesis 15:1-6, Hebrews 11:1-3, 8-16, Luke 12:32-40

Grace to you and peace from God our Father and our Lord Jesus Christ.

*Please be seated.*

“Do not be afraid, little flock, for it is your Father’s good pleasure to give you the kingdom.” With those words from Jesus, the message from last week continues – those who store up treasures for themselves are not rich toward God. Those who are greedy regarding earthly treasures – have no investment in the Kingdom of God.

Jesus continues this message in our text today by proclaiming the promise of salvation through Jesus Christ. In last weeks’ reading we heard Jesus tell the parable about the selfish, rich man who relied on his goods and grain – his earthly possessions – to secure his future. And immediately following his plan to eat, drink, and be merry, God came to him and said, “Fool, tonight you die.” We were reminded that it is not our earthly possessions that provide us true peace and salvation. Jesus teaches us that we are to stay focused on serving God and neighbor, AND that we should live like we were dying. Believing this message, we were challenged to answer the questions, “So what are we going to do?” And what are we going to do differently?”

The scriptures chosen for this week CONTINUE this message. First, Jesus repeats the message from last week by telling us that God WANTS to give us the kingdom. God takes pleasure in giving us his kingdom - Jesus teaches us that our earthly possessions do not give us security and peace - and that we are to use them in service – to literally GIVE THEM AWAY. In the same way, God does not keep his kingdom for himself – he gives it to us! Jesus says, “For

where your treasure is, there your heart will be also. Your heart follows your treasure! I once heard a pastor say, “Let me see your checkbook, and I can tell you where your treasure is!” Generally when we want something, like a new house, we first try to figure out if we can afford it. If we want it badly enough, sometimes we go a little beyond what we can comfortably afford to get it. What the pastor meant by the comment about the check book is – do we apply that same thinking to our investment in God’s kingdom? As we live out our lives of discipleship – do we GIVE AWAY more than we are comfortable with? What does it say when trying to determine out how much we will give to the church, we ask, “Now is it based on my gross salary, or my take-home pay?” In other words, how LITTLE can I give without feeling guilty? IS God’s kingdom where our treasure is?

Just as he did in the parable of the greedy man who built bigger barns and then died, Jesus warns us again, “Be dressed for action, and your lamps lit.” Referring to his OWN return, Jesus teaches us that we, like the servants who wait for their master to return from the wedding feast, Jesus tells us that like the bridesmaids, WE TOO must be ready and waiting at all times. Our investment in the kingdom of God requires continuous action. So, when WILL Jesus return? In Matthew’s gospel, Jesus says, “But about that day and hour no one knows, neither the angels of heaven, nor the Son, but only the Father.” You see, beloved, it doesn’t matter WHEN Jesus returns to take us into the kingdom of God. What matters is that he WILL. Jesus has promised to return – and we need to live like we are dying – ready and waiting for our Savior’s return. First Thessalonians, chapter four reads that, “<sup>16</sup> the Lord himself, with a cry of command, with the archangel's call and with the sound of God's trumpet, will descend from heaven, and the dead in Christ will rise first. <sup>17</sup> Then we who are alive, who are left, will be caught up in the clouds together with them to meet the Lord in the air; and so we will be with the Lord forever.”

But what is this Kingdom of God that we are called to focus on - to invest in?

**The Kingdom of God** is firmly rooted in the gospel of grace. It is not something we achieve, nor earn, nor build, nor create, nor prepare for by what we do. The Kingdom is pure, sweet, unmerited, and undeserved grace. It is a gift – no strings attached.

**The Kingdom of God** is not A place. **The Kingdom of God** is ANY place where people let go of their stuff, their pride, their willfulness and selfishness, their sin; and grab on to God instead.

**The kingdom of God** is not tangible. It is a trust - a faith - in almighty God that is so strong, so secure, so trusting, so filled with life and love, that all else fades into meaninglessness, into nothingness. The Kingdom of God comes to us by faith - the assurance of things hoped for, the conviction of things not seen.

But how do we do that? How do we make an investment in something we cannot see when there is so much in front of us that we CAN see? How can we let go of our love of earthly possessions, escape from the hold that money has on us and give it away - serve and care for our neighbor, be ready at all times – and, oh by the way – continue to live our routines of going to work, caring for our families, and dealing with all the daily struggles of life on earth? The answer to that question is different for all of us – and yet it is the same. The HOW is different but the WHY is the same. Faith. The evidence of things not see. To encourage us, the Genesis reading lists numerous examples. Abel, Enoch, Noah, Isaac, Jacob – and the list goes on and on. These people were not perfect, they are not heroes – but they ARE examples of faith. They HAD faith and they ACTED in faith. They were focused on the promise that God would create a new, holy city – the New Jerusalem. THAT was the homeland they sought. None of them saw the promise fulfilled in the birth, death, and resurrection of Jesus Christ, God’s only Son. And

yet, they had faith – they believed that they would receive the ultimate prize – the Kingdom of God! They are examples for US. It CAN be done!

Beloved, the hope of the Kingdom of God has been fulfilled in Jesus Christ, God's only Son. And God did this for us out of love! Just like the master of the servants who were prepared, God will have us sit down to eat at his table – GOD will come and serve US! Blessed are we!

Have no fear little flock, the father has chosen to give you the kingdom!

Thanks be to God!

Amen