



“Your Father’s Good Pleasure”

Twelfth Sunday after Pentecost
 5:30 pm, Saturday, August 6, 2016
 8:15 and 11:00 am, Sunday, August 7, 2016
 The Reverend John H. Brock
 Trinity Evangelical Lutheran Church
 Camp Hill, Pennsylvania

Hebrews 11:1-3, 8-16; Luke 12:32-40

Grace to you and peace, from God who is, who was, and who is to come. Amen.

In our gospel lesson, Jesus is using metaphor, trying to get the people and his followers ready for his return. Considering that he hasn't yet left, though, makes that seem a little weird. Yet in his own mind, he's gone, he's done, he's finished; so all that's left is prepping his people.

While thinking about this lesson, and speculating on Jesus' mind set, I was reminded of a show, I've seen a few times. It's called **Doomsday Preppers**. It's about folks who are getting ready for whatever apocalypse is coming, be it: zombies; nuclear war; or the wrong political party getting elected. These folks are going to be ready. Not all of them have vast stores of supplies, although some do. Some of the folks on the show, whether they're individuals or families, live in the country. Those preppers tend to build for themselves underground bunkers, or above ground fortresses. They have anywhere from one to three years of supplies: water; food; medicines and bandages; as well as seeds and farming equipment.

Others of the folks on the show live in a city. Those are the ones who learn different survival skills. They may have some supplies in their apartments, or a nearby storage locker. But the city dwellers primary strategy is to learn how to *Stop* others from getting into their protected area. City dwellers focus on setting up traps, should an intruder attempt to access through a door or window. They learn how to hunt city animals for their meat, like pigeons, rats, and other critters. And of course, they learn what kind of weapons work better in a city setting, where in all likelihood things are tighter, the quarters are closer, and there simply isn't the room that a wilderness bunker allows.

Be ready. Be prepared. That's what those shows preach. That's *almost* what Jesus is saying in our lesson.

Remember, from several weeks ago, back in chapter 9, we learn that Jesus has his “face set toward Jerusalem.” That's kind of code for “Jesus is getting ready to die.” When he gets to Jerusalem, it's what we call Holy Week: first he's hailed as a new king, the messiah, even; but soon the crowds turn against him, goaded on by religious leaders who are too afraid of losing their own power, and stuff gets nasty. He's arrested, put on trial, beaten nearly to death, then sentenced to death - a gruesome, awful, pain-filled death. Jesus *knows* this is

coming. That week, that entry, trial, and death, are what he is preparing for.

So it almost makes sense that, with that so heavy on his mind, and weighing down his heart, that his message at times tend to get a little grim. Because that's what we're hearing, here:

³³ Sell your possessions, and give alms. Make purses for yourselves that do not wear out, ³⁵ "Be dressed for action and have your lamps lit; 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."

Wow. Those are a *lot* of imperatives. Most of which sound nearly opposite of what we heard last week, with the story of the brother wanting his inheritance.

Last week, Jesus wasn't preaching against wealth or possessions. Yet, here, it sounds like we're supposed to be simultaneously *paupers* and *well prepared* for whatever is coming. I kind of want to say,

Come on, Jesus, make up your mind. Can we eat, drink and be merry? Can we dress as splendidly as the lilies of the field? Or do we sell everything and bunker down, because the thief/owner of the house is coming back at a time we know not when? What's the deal here?'

And the answer is, I do honestly believe, *Both*. I say that because of the way our lesson begins:

³² "Do not be afraid, little flock, for it is your Father's good pleasure to give you the kingdom."

Do not be afraid. Well, that pretty much goes against that whole "be ready for anything" attitude. Isn't **fear** what is one of the driving forces in that whole Doomsday Preppers scenario? For that matter, isn't fear one of the underlying factors in our current election? We're being told,

Don't vote for this candidate because of trust issues; don't vote for that candidate because of bizarre statements and debunked truths; don't vote for the candidate that has supposed big business interests for themselves, and don't vote for the candidate that has absolutely NO government experience at all.

Let me say that verse again:

³² "Do not be afraid, little flock, for it is your Father's good pleasure to give you the kingdom."

How are we supposed to **Not** be afraid, that's the question I want to ask? After that litany of preparedness, and what can go wrong, how can we **Not** worry? For that matter, why isn't **Jesus** more or less shaking in his sandals, knowing what he knows, knowing what he will face, knowing who will betray him, knowing how we, how I, will disappoint him?

it is your Father's good pleasure to give you the kingdom.

Okay, so here's a thing. Like I said last week, I don't think LGA is anti-wealth. God is not anti-possessions, or anti-things. It's alright to drive a car, to have nice clothes, to fix things when

they break, and purchase pretty things, or even stuff we *want*. We need to remember, however, that God never says that belief *automatically* means that we will **always** be able to do that. Simply because we *believe*, does not *guarantee* that we will have an easy life, nice stuff, or even enough of the necessities.

So, what, then, is with that *it is your Father's good pleasure to give you the kingdom*? God has **not** promised us affluence. God has **not** promised us health and wealth and the easy life - although some of us may have that. (and there are those preachers that will say *Exactly* that - but in my opinion, those who would preach that God promises us financial well-being for life are **Wrong**).

God has promised us *the kingdom*. We're not talking a physical kingdom, like Camelot here. *The kingdom* that Jesus is talking about here means the *presence of God*. God is promising us, in all that happens to us, in the good stuff and the bad; if we get a promotion at work or a pink slip; if we ace the test in school or fail the class; if we have the wealth we need or if we lack of funds for the necessities; in times of plenty and in times of need; when we're ready and prepared for anything, or if we're totally caught off guard; in *all that happens*, God is with us. **That** is *the kingdom*. **That** is our *Father's good pleasure*.

God wants us to be ready. God calls us to be prepared. So that is what we should strive for. Yet even when we're not ready, when we are caught unawares, God is still with us. And loves us. And cares for us. Because that is our Father's good pleasure.

Amen.