

Grace Presbyterian Church, Orleans

August 11, 2019

“Mission Preparedness”

Luke 12: 32 - 40

Pastor Jonathan

How do you plan a year, so that you can look forward to it, even if it may be difficult and you know that in advance? Grace faces that this year. You and I are Grace Church, members, attenders, leaders, all of us together.

Jesus never intended to teach that it would be easy to follow Him. In fact, He constantly tells us we have a choice. Every day, we have a choice to follow Him, ourselves, the voices on TV or news feeds, or the voices inside us from the past. Hearing voices can be a psychiatric problem, but in this case, we all hear thoughts in our heads and hearts, and we have choices to make.

At Camp Cherith, there were 27 children that gave their lives to the Lord a couple of weeks ago, in a setting that helps children and others focus on the voice of the Lord. They have a start in their lives. Please pray for them. We also ministered to 27 or so children here in this last week. Please pray for them too. God knows the names and circumstances of all 27. We are trusting the Lord for these, who are not mostly connected to Grace, but their parents signed up, knowing it was a church camp, a Jesus camp. We pointed them to the Lord.

But in the end, each of us must take responsibility for pointing ourselves in a certain direction every day. As you meet the day, in the consciousness of the morning, whether you are a morning person or not, you set your day. I encourage you to set it with Scripture and prayer, no matter how awake you are. Listen to God. That’s reading the Scriptures, and letting the Lord do that work. Speak out your openness to His mission in your life. Hear what He has to say. You will be encouraged.

Last week, we were encouraged to monitor and actively know what our desires are, in this life. Do we desire the Kingdom of God? We heard the story of the man who wanted to take early retirement, bought new storage facilities for all his business and stuff, to be able to live it up for that early retirement, and guess what, he died early and all that stuff went to someone else. Jesus warns us to not live for ourselves, or we too will find this same reality in our lives, early retirement or not. That’s where we were last week.

We are completing six weeks on Dr. Luke's study of "Accepting Jesus' Mission in our Lives," in Luke, chapters 10 to 12. And we have studied most of the rest of Luke's gospel through the Seasons of the Church. Dr. Luke starts his Gospel (Luke 1-2) with the Christmas story and ends it with the Resurrection story (Luke 24). These events are celebrated respectively in the winter, or just before, in December and in the spring, often in April. Sandwiched in between these great events of Jesus' birth and resurrection, are the rest of the Gospel and Jesus calling us to be and do His Mission. Holy week, the last week of Jesus' earthly ministry, takes up chapters 22 and 23. We've also heard teaching on how Jesus' ministry started in Luke 3 and 4, his baptism and time in the desert, which is often celebrated in many churches in a season called Lent in February, which is our desert time. We have heard Jesus' healing and miracles in chapters 5 and 6. We received his teaching from the Mount. We received his teaching in parables or stories that both conceal and reveal in chapters 7 and 8. In chapter 9, Jesus sends out the Twelve for Mission work. In chapters 10 to 12, he sends out 72 others in pairs. We have been focusing on these chapters the last six weeks. I know it is summer, and many of you have been coming and going. We have also taken a large part of the rest of the school year in chapters 13 to 20, where Dr. Luke uniquely talks about a Lost Son and Son at home who is Lost, and the Father who loves them. He also uniquely talks about a persistent widow who bugs a judge into doing what she wants, and a persistent friend who gets bread late at night because he bothers him, and God reminds us that He is better than that judge and that friend.

Every day when we wake up in the morning, it is a chance to give our worries to God. Do you acknowledge that you have worries? If you find it hard to accept that you do, let a loved one help you realize what you worry about. Next: Do you keep a worry list? Perhaps it would be good to keep one, so as to give it to God, then as God answers the worries, you can cross them off or destroy that list. Maybe get a little cheap note book, I saw them the other day at a major store for 10¢. Yes, ten cents. I didn't know a dime could buy anything (plus tax). Get one of these, or even better use a journal you're not using, put a worry on one page, then as God addresses it, tear it out. Just a thought.

Luke 12: 22ff. Jesus tells us not to worry. Don't worry about eating. Don't worry about clothing. Birds get along. You will too. We don't worry about what you wear to church. And I won't either. I'll mostly wear the same

thing, most of the year. I may wear something different for the sacraments, just because I've spent my life in this pastoral office and it does mean something to wear something different for that occasion. But you can come as you are. That's the best way to come to the Table and come, ready to open yourself up to Jesus.

Hear how valuable you are to God, in those verses we didn't read from Luke 12: 22-25. Do you know how valuable you are to God? You are His representative, good, bad or indifferent! You are on His Mission, if you have chosen to follow Him. You are on it on your good days and on your bad days.

Now listen to this. You're going to need this for the next twelve months. So he tells you to go look at some flowers. God takes care of their beauty and their needs. He will take care of yours. Take a picture of a lily and put in a prominent place to remind you of how God takes care of you, of how you don't have to spend a huge amount of time and energy on your diet. Look at the lily or its picture (or some other flower you love, see power point pic) and say to yourself, "I will seek first God's kingdom and mission, and leave the rest to God..." (Luke 12:31)

Okay. Listen again. Once you have that flower firmly in mind, and that prayer firmly in mind...hear God say...in the midst of your worst circumstances... "Don't be afraid..." Listen to that again. "Don't be afraid..." "Your Father has been pleased to give you the kingdom." (Luke 12:32) So we have a kingdom as royal heirs, that is ours. That means we need to take that inheritance more seriously, and all our stuff here less seriously. There's the hard part. How seriously do you take your stuff?

Your house, your car, your furniture, your clothes, your jewelry, your possessions of every kind. Jesus teaches here that we should all be readying ourselves to move. I can tell you that it is unsettling, by definition, to be ready to move, anytime. Settling is easier. Acquiring is easier and more fun. But Jesus says, "Get ready to move." Get rid of your possessions, sell them if you can and give the money to those who need it. Because you only get to keep what you give away. Jesus words exactly are: "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." (Luke 12:33)

We all need a certain amount of stuff to carry on our daily lives, but most of us have way more than that: way more clothes, way more knick knacks, way more furniture, way more stuff; isn't that right? Now is the time to give away what you can. Give it to the Mission Thrift store, or wherever God is leading you. Give it, while you still are able to give it; and someone else doesn't have to make that decision for you, or after you.

I'm not telling you to give away everything you own. That is between you and the Lord. I have known Christians who have given it all away and gone to do Youth with a Mission work. I have known Christians who have given it all away. You might be one. I don't know. But I am strongly recommending to all of you, give away what you don't use and don't need. It's not about the clutter. Jesus doesn't check on your housework. He does check on your heart.

That's why He says, "For where your treasure is, there your heart will be also." (Luke 12: 34) It's as easy as 1-2-3-4. All you have to know is where your heart is. There's the big question. Do you know where your heart is? Do you? ...I'm still learning.

This is the same point that Jesus made in Dr. Luke's account last week: What do you really want? Do you really want the kingdom, Jesus' kingdom? Or do you want to "Take life easy; eat, drink and be merry." That's a quote from the nameless guy who wanted to retire early (Luke 12:19). And it's not bad to retire early. The question is what your true desires are.

We will find out in the next year what are our true desires as a congregation. We will need to talk to each other whether the desires of our denomination and our desires line up. We will need to talk to each other about what we really believe and what say we believe and how strongly we believe it. Do our faith convictions merit leaving our building behind? What is truly important to us? How important is it for you to follow the Scriptures and follow the Lord? All these things will be tested this year.

I'm not telling you the outcome of what we will discuss in advance, because I don't know. I know that your desires and my desires will be tested in the coming year in ways that we have not yet discovered. Where is your heart? Does your heart fully belong to the Lord? What things are coming between

you and Him? It is your personal life. It is your possessions. It is your relationships. It is also your congregational life. Jesus looks at it all.

Dr. Luke concludes this section of teaching up to verse 40 of chapter 12, by talking to us about preparedness. Are we ready for Jesus' second coming? Are we serving Jesus, or just feeding ourselves? Are we ready like the employees of a businessman who are working diligently while the boss is away? Or are we those employees who would know the businessman is gone for a long time and we're not sure if He's ever coming back, so we will party and do what we want while He's away? Jesus says he is coming back like a thief in the night, at a time we will least suspect.

So today's a good day to talk about getting rid of at least one bag of stuff. Don't take the whole house on, you'll never get started. But fill one bag. Make it a small bag if a large one is too intimidating. Start there and you will see where God leads you. Are there memories you want to share with your children and grandchildren? Prepare them today and send them as soon as possible. Don't wait. The rainy day for that kind of activity never comes. I know. Keep your load light, if you can.

In all these things, we prepare ourselves for the Mission. Jesus' Mission carries on through us. May He help us take His Mission seriously.

Let us pray.