

TWELFTH SUNDAY AFTER PENTECOST: August 1 – 7, 2016

Lectionary Readings: Genesis 15:1–6, Psalm 33:12–22, Hebrews 11:1–3, 8–16, Luke 12:32–40

Prayer of the Day: *Almighty God, you sent your Holy Spirit to be the life and light of your church. Open our hearts to the riches of your grace, that we may be ready to receive you wherever you appear, through Jesus Christ, our Savior and Lord. Amen.*

This week's references come from the following sources. The appropriate resource will be referenced at the end of an entry by using the letters preceding each resource listed here.

- BPS: Brian P. Stoffregen's commentary notes (Pr, Faith Luth, Yuma AZ) Crossmarks.com/brian
- DL: David Lose, Luther Seminary, *In the Meantime*, www.davidlose.net
- DT: David L. Tiede, *Augsburg Commentary on the New Testament: Luke*
- JG: Joel Green, *The New International Commentary: The Gospel of Luke*
- JS: John Shea, *The Relentless Widow (Luke)*
- L: Lectionary.com
- LTJ: Luke Timothy Johnson, *Sacra Pagina: The Gospel of Luke*
- NISB: *New Interpreter's Study Bible*"
- WP: WorkingPreacher.org (Luther Seminary)
 - Karolyn Lewis, (2013), Associate Professor of Preaching, Luther Seminary, St. Paul
 - David Lose (2010), now President, Lutheran Theological Seminary in Philadelphia.
 - Erick J. Thompson, Senior Pastor, Holy Trinity Lutheran, New Prague, MN.

Background information on this text:

- "We are well into the section of Luke known as the 'travel narrative' where Jesus has set his sights on Jerusalem and spends about ten chapters getting there." (Karolyn Lewis, WP)
- **"Meaning in Context:** We all know that a critical move for faithful biblical interpretation is to locate a passage into its multiple contexts. The context that is perhaps the most helpful for making sense of these verses is the literary context. While the pericope [Scripture readings for a particular Sunday] begins with 'Do not fear, little flock,' these words of encouragement might be better heard as the conclusion to Jesus' previous sayings. Jesus has just pointed out the lilies of the field that grow because of God's care, the ravens for which God provides. In other words, 'do not fear' is not an out-of-the-blue optimistic statement, pie-in-the-sky platitude, but one grounded in the claim that God's faithfulness extends to the entirety of God's creation." (Karolyn Lewis, WP)

- "12:1—13:21 *He Calls for Readiness and Repentance*

This section is an extended presentation of Jesus' teaching of his disciples and the multitudes. It is not tightly structured, but moves along by persistently identifying the audience of succeeding portions...

These teachings follow the troubling disclosures of opposition to Jesus (11:14-54). The story is still filled with urgency, but now it is elaborating what Jesus' mission means to the faithful. No easy path is promised. Genuine struggle and trials lie ahead for Jesus' disciples as well as for him. Nevertheless, the key to the whole section probably lies in a word of Jesus which only Luke conveys: **'Fear not, little flock, for it is your Father's good pleasure to give you the kingdom'** (12:32).

The reader is never reminded within this lengthy section that Jesus is still journeying to Jerusalem. There is also no suggestion that this is one continuous 'speech.' ...

...Luke's narrative offers an interpretation of these sayings as words for those who are following the 'way of the Lord'... Thus Jesus' teaching in 10:25—11:13 has led to his encounter with opposition (11:14-54). This second teaching section (12:1—13:21) then

speaks to the faithful before the mission to Jerusalem resumes (13:22). The literary device of following the journey is strained, but not broken.” (DT, 226-227)

- “These verses are part of a larger section of Jesus’ warnings and exhortations (12:1 – 13:9). This section (vv. 32-48) promises hope, and would therefore be of special interest to Luke’s church, which is suffering persecution. It would also be of special interest to a church that has been looking for the Parousia (Second Coming) for many years and is beginning to wonder when it will take place.” (L)
- “The pattern of alternating audiences that Luke uses throughout the journey of the Prophet toward Jerusalem appears again in this section. We have learned of the massive crowd pressing on Jesus in 12:1, so that they are a silent presence as Jesus addresses his disciples on courage before the threat to their lives. Now, with stunning irrelevancy (but providing a wonderful opportunity to the moralist), a voice from the crowd asks Jesus to mediate in a family inheritance dispute. Not only does the anonymous questioner reveal inattentiveness to the seriousness of Jesus’ discourse, but an unawareness that something more than another ‘lawyer’ is here. In any case, Luke uses this framing device to set up what is in effect a long *qal wehomer* (lesser to greater) argument, but in reverse. If his teaching to this point has stressed lack of fear before the immediate threat life, *how much less* should fear generate an obsessive concern with possessions.” (TLJ, 201)

Day 1

Luke 12:32-40

³²“Do not be afraid, little flock, for it is your Father’s good pleasure to give you the kingdom. ³³Sell your possessions, and give alms. Make purses for yourselves that do not wear out, an unfailling treasure in heaven, where no thief comes near and no moth destroys. ³⁴For where your treasure is, there your heart will be also. ³⁵“Be dressed for action and have your lamps lit; ³⁶be like those who are waiting for their master to return from the wedding banquet, so that they may open the door for him as soon as he comes and knocks. ³⁷Blessed are those slaves whom the master finds alert when he comes; truly I tell you, he will fasten his belt and have them sit down to eat, and he will come and serve them. ³⁸If he comes during the middle of the night, or near dawn, and finds them so, blessed are those slaves. 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. ⁴⁰You also must be ready, for the Son of Man is coming at an unexpected hour.”

Read through the entire Gospel lesson:

- We invite you to continue journaling as a part of your devotional/meditative time.
- Jot down any words or phrases that stand out to you.
- What do you think God might be saying in this story? Record this in your journal.

Day 2

Luke 12:32-34

³²“Do not be afraid, little flock, for it is your Father’s good pleasure to give you the kingdom. ³³Sell your possessions, and give alms. Make purses for yourselves that do not wear out, an unfailling treasure in heaven, where no thief comes near and no moth destroys. ³⁴For where your treasure is, there your heart will be also.

Background:

- 12:32-34 "...the kingdom of God is not only a gift but also an obligation. Rather than being occupied with the buildup of treasures with an eye to self-security in this life (v. 21), disciples need to be concerned with ensuring that they possess treasures in heaven. Therefore, seeking the kingdom (v. 31) is tantamount to setting one's heart on the kingdom (v. 34), and the consequence of this orientation of life is a heavenly treasure that is neither subject to the exigencies of earthly existence nor endangered by the unexpected intervention of God.

At work in this instruction is a subtle but significant shift in the forms of reciprocity familiar throughout the Roman world. Normally, one with treasures to share does so in order to place others in her debt; gifts are given in order to secure or even advance one's position in the community. Inherent to the giving of 'gifts' in this economy is the obligation of repayment. The material sharing Jesus counsels has a different complexion. Disinvestment and almsgiving grounded in a thoroughgoing commitment to the kingdom of God are to be practiced in recognition that God is the Supreme Benefactor who provides both for the giver and for the recipient. Such giving has the effect not of placing persons in debt, but rather of embracing the needy as member of one's own inner circle. In the economy intrinsic to the kingdom, those who give without exacting reciprocation, for example, in the form of loyalty or service, are actually repaid by God. Such giving, then, is translated into solidarity with the needy on earth and into heavenly treasure (see 6:35)." (JG, 495-496)

- 12:32-34 "This teaching concludes Luke's account of Jesus' famous teaching about the ravens of the air and the lilies of the field (Luke 12:22-31). The little flock is encouraged to adopt the alternative consciousness that is advocated in that teaching. The dominant consciousness sees life as an anxious project for survival, constantly concerned with food, clothing, and shelter. The alternative consciousness proposes considering life as a gift given from beyond itself. This gift is previous to our toil and the Source of Life feeds it.

...Adopting the consciousness of life as a gracious gift is risky business. It may compromise the struggle to survive. But the little flock is not to be afraid of this strange new way. Their struggle will be grounded in the Father's good pleasure. Giving life is what delights the Father. The generative love of the Source is thrilled to give life (the kingdom) to all who can receive it. Therefore, this way is built into the ultimate structure of reality. Once life is received from a bountiful Giver, whoever receives it naturally gives this life to others...

This consciousness of receiving and giving reflects the eternal order of things...the receiving and giving of life is beyond both destruction and plunder. If the disciples value (treasure) this, it will gradually enter the center of their being (the heart). The heart is the spiritual core of the person that receives from God and gives into the world. This is the spiritual development that characterizes life in the kingdom." (JS, 220-221)

- 12:32-33 "... the theme of the whole section (12:1—13:21) is sounded with [this] Luke's crucial addition to Jesus' teachings from 'Q'... This wondrous assurance rings out like a hymn. It is linked to the immediate context by the words **Father** and **kingdom** (vv. 30, 31). While the masculine term offends modern gender-conscious ears—for important reasons—the strength and gentle grace of this promise must not be lost...This is not a demand from an oppressive 'father figure,' but an earnest desire of a loving parent...

Even the **kingdom** is not an achievement to be sought, but a gift to be received. Thus the 'seeking' for the kingdom which was taught in 'Q' (v. 31) is interpreted in terms of a gift to the flock which God intends to bestow.

Even as a gift, the kingdom of God does not come without tribulation...So also the simple life of the witnesses to the kingdom who sell their possessions and give alms (see also 10:3-12) will certainly involve conflict with authorities and systems. But God's way of ruling in heaven and on earth has been revealed to proceed from God's gift and grace. Because God's initiative in Jesus, those who follow this Messiah may live with such hope rather than with persistent human anxiety

- 12:32 **little flock**: “The gentleness here matches that of ‘my friends’ in 12:4, and the image of the flock echoes the designation of Israel guided by the Lor (as in Ezek 34:11-24). The disciples represent that ‘little flock’ which forms the nucleus of the restored people forming around the prophet.” (LTJ, 200)
- 12:32 “...one verse that is easy to gloss over that helps put these others in some theological and homiletical perspective: **‘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 as well. (It is also what God says to Abram in today's first reading.) Typically, ‘Do not be afraid,’ is the rhetorical prelude to the announcement of God's mighty and saving deeds. And 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 Son of Man.” (DL)
 - “Jesus promises that God has given everything so that we do not need to be afraid.” (Thompson, WP)
 - “Jesus affirms it has pleased God *to give you the kingdom* ...; hence Jesus' disciples are liberated from the peril of possessions [as we read in 12:13-34] and enabled to reorder their lives so as to care for the needy.” (NISB, 1879)
 - “Just as we need not be anxious about our daily bread, so we also need not be anxious about our kingdom inheritance.” (L)
- 12:32 “[This verse] is unique to Luke. It presents an interesting contrast to v. 31, where Jesus tells us to ‘keep on seeking’ (present tense) God's kingdom. Here God wants to **give** us the **kingdom**. That which we are to seek, God is more than willing to give us. ... Christianity is centered on receiving what God has given us. Religions emphasize human actions. Christianity emphasizes God's actions.

me phobou is present tense -- "Do not continue to be afraid." The same phrase is used when angels appear...

The theme of ‘fear’ is found earlier in this chapter in vv. 4, 5, 7. Verse 7 has the same construction as v. 32, but in the plural. There the reason not to continue to be afraid is because we are more valuable than many sparrows.

Here we are called ‘little flock.’ Every other time this word for flock (*poimnion*) is used in the NT it refers to a group of believers (Acts 20:28, 29; 1 Pet 5:2, 3).

The word for ‘good pleasure’ is used of God's feelings towards Jesus (3:3)...” (BPS)
- 12:32 “In [this verse], God is presented as a **giver**. In v. 33, we are commanded to be **givers** -- giving to the poor. This same word occurs later in this section. In v. 42 it is used of the managers who **give** food to the servants at the proper time. In v. 48b, which concludes this section, there is general statement: "From everyone to whom much has been **given**, much will be required, and from the one to whom much has been entrusted, even more will be demanded." (BPS)
- 12:33-34 “[These verses] return to the theme of possessions [*ta hyparchonta*] which were part of last week's text. The proper use of possessions is a special interest in Luke/Acts... In Luke, I don't think that a person could be a faithful follower of Jesus and have lots of possessions. The proper use of one's abundance is to give them away or share them (or the money received from selling them) for the common good. We also know that this communal structure did not last very long in the early church... Note also that in the first century, it was believed that there was a fixed and limited amount of wealth. If someone gained wealth, someone else had to lose it. (BPS)
- 12:33a “The point of **almsgiving**, I think, is not to elevate poverty - circumstantial or chosen - but rather to extol generosity as a mark of the Christian life. Similarly, the watchfulness Jesus commands is not an anxious anticipation of the end of the world but rather an eager

expectation of God's consummation of history. What Jesus is commending is faith - faith that frees one to be generous; faith that enables one to leave anxiety behind; faith that creates in one confidence about a future secured not by human endeavor or achievement but by God alone." (DL)

- "The idea that almsgiving brought such a heavenly recompense is standard in rabbinic literature." (LTJ)
- "Our text begins with God giving us much -- the kingdom! We then move to what God requires of us -- to give alms. That is, give to the poor. The word translated "alms" in the NRSV is *eleemosyne*, which comes from a word meaning "mercy." So this is more than just throwing a donation to the poor, it stems from being merciful to those in need. The same construction is used in 11:41 where the giving of alms needs to come from within a person." (BPS)
- "It is a radically faith-filled approach to money and property. None of this makes sense apart from faith that God has already established the kingdom and has invited us to begin life under Kingdom Rules." (L)
- "There is a tension here between salvation by grace and salvation by works. We must be careful not to make it sound as if charitable work can win us salvation irrespective of our relationship to Christ, but we must also be careful not to discount the rewards that Jesus promises for almsgiving." (L)
- 12:33b "The word for '**purse**' (*ballantion*) is found only in Luke (10:4; 12:33; 22:35, 36). It refers specifically to a bag for carrying money. The grammar seems to be a type of parallelism:
'Make for yourselves purses that do not become old.'
'[Make for yourselves] a treasure that is unfailing in the heavens.'
...'purses is plural' and 'treasure' is singular. We each may have our purses, but there is one treasure that is shared by all.
The phrase '**treasure in heaven**' is also used in Luke 18:22 in reference to the rich man. This man had originally asked about "inheriting eternal life." Jesus gives him instructions about having 'treasure in heaven.' He is to sell all that he owns and distribute the money to the poor. This sounds quite similar to our verse.
It also seems quite ironic that we build up a treasure in heaven by giving away money on earth! That isn't the way we usually think of creating a treasure for ourselves." (BPS)
- 12:33 "The world tells us to find something we love and to use our money for it. That approach leads to wild excesses. Jesus offers an alternative, telling us to give alms and assuring us that our hearts will follow our gifts." (L)
 - "... humans have an eternal destiny. This existence is not their only one: what they do now has consequences for the future. The point is not to imply that they should 'not worry' about food and clothing, but that they should far more radically 'sell their possessions. Give alms.'" (LTJ, 202)
 - "The **treasure in the heavens**, therefore, is an act of earthly faith, living in confidence of the present reality of God's kingdom while it is still contested. It is an investment strategy concerning what will last and what is truly worthwhile. This is not a 'heavenly mindedness' which is no 'earthly good.' It is an earthly faith in the kingdom of righteousness and mercy which Jesus has inaugurated. The ethics of this faith are also stated quite literally here, but not as a way to produce the kingdom. They are rather a real possibility because in Christ Jesus, the kingdom has been given.
This reign may well seem foolish and vulnerable by the standards of those who have wealth and power, but it is the very strength of God for living in uncertain times with the security of God's reign. And when this Messiah has been crucified, vindicated, and exalted as Lord and Savior, Luke's testimony could declare that the kingdom has been inaugurated." (DT, 238)

- 12:34 “your heart also will be. . . The statement is the same in Matt 6:21, but in Luke it has been prepared for by the frequent connections drawn between human passions (the heart) and possessions (the treasure).” (LTJ, 201)

Reflection Question:

- How do you receive the “kingdom?” How does it make a difference to you to know that “it is your Father’s good pleasure to give you the kingdom?”
- What is your interpretation of verse 34: “For where your treasure is, there your heart will be also?” How does this apply to your life? The life of your faith community? What do your priorities in life say about your values?
- Where do you see today the type of “giving” paradigm that Joel Green talks about in the Roman culture of Jesus’ day (see the first background note under Day 2)?
- Who are the ‘needy’ in your life, in the life of your faith community, in our global community? How are we caring for them and embracing them as part of our community?

Day 3

Luke 12:35-38

³⁵“Be dressed for action and have your lamps lit; ³⁶be like those who are waiting for their master to return from the wedding banquet, so that they may open the door for him as soon as he comes and knocks. ³⁷Blessed are those slaves whom the master finds alert when he comes; truly I tell you, he will fasten his belt and have them sit down to eat, and he will come and serve them. ³⁸If he comes during the middle of the night, or near dawn, and finds them so, blessed are those slaves.

Background:

- 12:35-48 “Without pausing, Jesus continues the discourse begun in v. 22, apparently, then, addressing his disciples. His opening words (v. 35), cast in the imperative and calling for readiness, however, recall the analogous directive in v. 15, addressed to both disciples and crowds. As though he were using a telephoto lens, Luke has centered our attention on the disciples, but the presence of many others continues to be felt. This contributes to the ambiguity Luke’s readers may experience as they attempt to discern the nature of Jesus’ audience at this juncture, and to which Peter gives voice in v. 41: ‘Lord, are you telling this parable for us or for everyone?’ The importance of this narrative strategy on Luke’s part is derived from the fact that the prohibition of an easy identification of Jesus’ audience also keeps those in Luke’s audience from potentially dismissing his message as irrelevant to them. Irrespective of which characters within the story readers have come to identify with, the collapsing of all characters into a single, ‘universal audience’ raises the prospect of the significance of Jesus’ teaching for everyone.

...Not only this section but the whole of this address, beginning in v. 1, has an eschatological timber...Throughout, Jesus has expounded on the *theme* of ‘vigilance in the face of eschatological crisis.’ Including as *motifs* vigilance with respect to persecution (vv. 1-12), possessions (vv. 13-35), and now, more generally, faithfulness within the household of God. What is more, Jesus’ words to his disciples—‘Do not be afraid...for it is your Father’ good pleasure to give you the kingdom (v. 32)—already applied to questions of security and material goods, are equally relevant to his present instruction on fidelity with respect to what ‘has been given’ (v. 48b).” (JG, 497)

- 12:35-48 “Seemingly without taking a breath, Jesus moves into this new stage of his lengthy discourse, again placing all of his instruction in this subsection (12:1-13:9) within the temporal context of the coming end-time crisis. In doing so he underscores (1) the certainty of his return, (2) the uncertainty of its timing, (3) the present as being an opportunity for faithful

service, and (4) the relationship between present vigilance and future rewards and punishments. Faithful response is worked out in language familiar to the Roman household, used in ways that must have been stunning. The master of the house waits at the table? God's faithful should behave like household servants? Here is an overturning of conventional norms reminiscent of Mary's Song (1:46-55)." (NISB, 1879)

- "...these words are best understood by a careful assessment of the way Luke has modified them and placed them in his story. Thus they are now a proclamation to Luke's own community, addressing the problem of the delay in Jesus' return with renewed calls for readiness in prospect of coming judgment..."

...this commentary bends every effort to understand what such traditional sayings mean within the narrative or plot of Luke's story itself...as a narrator Luke has consistently gathered up these words of Jesus into the beginning, middle, and end of the story. This narrative context is directly accessible to the interpreter even if the historical context may only be indirectly inferred. Thus even in this section where the traditional sayings appear to be only loosely 'collected,' the reader must first seek to understand what these words mean within Luke's story of Jesus. Then the possible significance for Luke's church [and of us today] of such a telling may be explored. [C&S emphasis]

In this context, the call for readiness sounded in these sayings belongs to the urgency of the 'hidden and revealed' reign of God. Both the immediate disciples and the larger multitude have been instructed in whom to fear and what not to, what is worth single-mindedness and what anxieties should be forgotten. And now the concern for readiness and watchfulness will be focused on the building tension of Jesus' kingdom campaign as it heads for Jerusalem. Now these words are prophetic, anticipating the coming of the crisis of the 'visitation' (see 19:44). In the context of Luke's story, only the ignorant and unfaithful are deluded by apparent delay. These are all words to the faithful, revealing Jesus' sense of determination and alerting the faithful and the reader that the time of the kingdom is already unfolding." (DT, 238-239)

- 12:35-36 "Jesus moves immediately into these words of alert. He has just spoken about the hazards of wealth and the freedom to live without possessions, and his call for readiness needs no other introduction. Israel had been instructed long before about eating the Passover with 'your loins girded, your sandals on your feet and your staff in your hand' (Exod. 12:1), like a firefighter sleeping in full dress. This state of preparation would also be excellent counsel for the church of Luke's time (or the present), since the master could come at any time. But in the story, this counsel is a direct clue that now is the time to be 'watchful,' for the Lord is the one in charge of the timing. Only Luke recites these sayings." (DT, 239-240)
- 12:35a "A literal translation is 'Let your loins be girded.' It pictures a person with a loose robe cinched up to permit easy movement. It recalls the instructions for the original Passover meal (Exodus 12:11)." (L)
 - "The Greek of verse 35 reads: 'the loins having been girded,' but this phrase means nothing to us non-loin wearing people. Originally it meant tying up around the waist the lower parts of one's robe so as to be ready to run. How do we express this phrase in English so that it is faithful to the original and makes sense to 21st century Americans?" (BPS)
- 12:35b "Oil lamps require constant attention. Wicks must be trimmed and oil replenished. Even a well-maintained lamp takes time to light." (L)
- 12:36-40 "A word that occurs in every verse from 36-40 is '**coming**' (*erchomai*). In vv. 36-38, the slaves need to be 'awake' and ready to respond to their master's **coming** whenever it might be. In v. 39 the home-owner needs to be prepared for the thief's **coming** whenever it might be. In v. 40 we need to be ready for the **coming** of the Son of Man whenever it might be." (BSP)

- 12:37-38 "...the whole point so far in Luke is positive. These servants are **blessed**...The kingdom is to be a gift (v. 32), and the faithful servants will be so blessed that the lord (vv. 36, 37; Gk: *kyrios*...) will even put on his apron at the oddest hour and serve the servants. Of course, this is exactly what Jesus does in the meal in Luke 22:14-28 along with considerable discussion about Jesus as the one who serves rather than 'exercising **lordship**' over them. The disciples, however, do not do so well then at remaining awake (22:39-46)." (DT, 240)
- 12:37 "...strangely, the roles of slave and master are reversed. It is the master who feeds us and serves our well-being, filling us abundantly. The most subversive truth is that the master's pleasure is not a being served but in serving." (DS, 221)
 - "There is another reason why I think that this picture of the master serving the slave is a difficult picture for us to capture. It turns our normal picture of religion upside down. The Christian faith means being served by God and receiving gifts from God! In contrast, I think that most religions (even Christianity as a religion) stress the followers' duty to serve the god..." (BPS)
 - "Jesus' parables appear at first to be innocent stories using commonplace events to make an obvious point, but then they suddenly take an unexpected direction — a parabolic direction:
 - And so it is a Samaritan who proves to be neighbor to the wounded man (10:36-37).
 - And so a rich man says, "Soul, you have many goods laid up for many years," but God says, "You foolish one, tonight your soul is required of you" (12:19-20).
 Now, in this parable of the watchful slaves, we expect the slaves to seat the master (*kyrios* — Lord) at the table so they can serve him dinner. Instead, Jesus says that the master will invite the slaves to sit at the table while he serves them. This refers to the eschatological (end of time) banquet that the disciples will enjoy when Jesus returns." (L)
 - "... those who are ready for the return of the master will be served by God. This theme contradicts our usual notion that we are to serve God. Instead, God will be serving you! As noted above, this is not a works-righteousness system. Rather, it is more of a promise of what will happen when one has begun to re-center life around God; the good news of Christ will serve you in your life so that you are not afraid." (Thompson, WP)
- 12:38 "...there is no way to predict or prescribe when this consciousness of being fed by God will arrive. It may be anytime—in the middle of the night or at dawn. But, most likely, it will be at an unexpected hour. So the most reasonable preparation is constant alertness. This vigilance signified a readiness to be blessed by the Reality who is always ready to bless." (JS, 222)
 - "Those who are ready will be **blessed** (Greek: *makarioi* — the same word used in the Beatitudes)." (L)

Reflection Questions:

- What do these sayings of Jesus say to you? How do they relate to your life? To the life of your faith community?
- How do we/you prepare for the "coming of Christ?"
- "He will come and serve them:" What does it mean to you that the master/God serves you? How does this concept fit into your perception of God?

Day 4

Luke 12:39-40

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. ⁴⁰You also must be ready, for the Son of Man is coming at an unexpected hour.”

Background:

- 12:39-40 “These sayings are almost verbatim with Matt. 24:43-44 ... these ‘Q’ sayings explore the negative side of the call to be on alert. Certainly this warning about the unknown time of the coming of the Son of man was understood by many in the early church to be a reference to the ‘second coming’ or return of Jesus. This expectation was also directly supported by Luke’s account of Jesus’ ‘departure’ into heaven (Acts 1:11), and it was connected with Jesus’ role as the reigning Son of man as revealed in Stephen’s vision (Acts 7:56).

It is noteworthy that the warnings in these sayings are all based on the conviction of the last phrase: **for the Son of man is coming at an unexpected hour**. This statement is verbatim in Matthew, and it also fits directly with Jesus’ last words on earth in Acts: ‘It is not for you to know the times or seasons which the Father has fixed by his own authority. But you shall receive power ... and ... be my witnesses ...’ (Acts 1:7-8) Matthew and Luke agree explicitly with the Jesus tradition that speculations about God’s timetable are faithless and fruitless. Readiness does not mean second-guessing, but faithfulness in service and constancy in witness. Those who are charged with guarding the house or the flock...must remain at their posts for the duration of their watch. Neither the thief in the night nor the Son of man intends to provide advance clues so that half-hearted watchfulness will suffice...” (DT, 240-241)

- 12:39-40 “Note: the Greek for ‘coming’ in both 39, 40 is present tense, not future! This is also true in the phrase from Revelation, ‘who was, who is, and who **is coming**.’ It may have a future sense, but it may also have a continually present sense -- being prepared for the one who is always coming.” (BPS)
- 12:40 “**to be ready**’ or ‘prepared?’ ... The verb occurs 14 times. It is used of John the Baptist (1:17, 76; 3:4) who prepares the way for Jesus’ coming. His preparation is centered on repentance, baptism, forgiveness, and amendment of life. Is this a model for our preparedness for Jesus coming?

It is used of the disciples obeying Jesus’ command **to prepare** the upper room for the Passover meal / Last Supper (22:8, 9, 12, 13). If Holy Communion is a ‘coming’ of Jesus -- especially as we understand it as Jesus coming to serve us -- I think it relates well to our text. How do we prepare for this sacramental coming? ...

Part of our preparation is self-examination -- hearing again John’s cry of repentance, to prepare ourselves for the coming of the Lord.

Part of our preparation is humility -- letting ourselves be served by God -- recognizing that we are ‘seeing God’s salvation, which God has **prepared** in the presence of all peoples’ (2:31).

Other references of the word in Luke:

9:52 -- messengers enter a Samaritan village to **make preparations** for Jesus’ coming to that city. They were unsuccessful. The people would not receive him...

12:20 -- from last week’s lesson where what the rich man had **prepared** were of no benefit to him at his death. Perhaps we can do a lot of religious busy-work that might make us happy, but really doesn’t matter that much to God or the needy.

23:56; 24:1 -- the **preparation** of spices for Jesus’ burial.

It may be from my own bias, but it would seem that **preparing** for the coming of the Son of man is tied up with his present coming to us and serving us in Word and Sacraments. Being

prepared for his future coming, means receiving his comings to us through these means in the present. In a sense, being prepared is to let him prepare us for the coming..." (BPS)

12:41 "Peter said, 'Lord, are you telling this parable for us or for everyone?'"

12:48b "From everyone to whom much has been given, much will be required; and from the one to whom much as been entrusted, even more will be demanded."

- "Peter's question in v. 41 ensures that Luke's readers see themselves as implicated in Jesus' warnings, and v. 48b generalizes the basis on which present fidelity and end-time judgment are correlated ... Peter's question serves a deliberate narrative function for Luke, drawing attention in an explicit way to an ambiguity in the identification of Jesus' audience at this point. It is apparent that Jesus has been addressing his disciples (vv 1, 4, 22) in the midst of the crowds (vv. 1, 13); in typically Lukan fashion, such classifications have become blurred. Peter seems to want to work with a distinction between 'us' (i.e., the disciples) and 'everyone,' but the narrator will allow no such contrast." (JG, 500, 503)
 - "Every once in a while, I am tempted to add a verse or two at the beginning or end of the lectionary reading to fill out its literary context.
This is one of those days, though my rationale is less for context and more for humor. After reading this passage about giving all one has to the poor and about being on the watch for Christ's unexpected return, we may well want to echo Peter's question in verse 41: 'Lord, are you telling this parable for us or for everyone?' Odds are, most of us are hoping it is addressed to a generic 'everyone,' not directly to us!" (David Lose, WP)

Reflection Questions:

- Pastor Stoffregen asks: "What does it mean 'to be ready' or 'prepared?' ... What about in terms of the coming of the Son of Man? How do we prepare for Jesus' comings?"
 - How do you answer these questions?
He adds: "We need to remember that the Jesus who is coming in the future is also the Jesus who came in the past and who comes in the present as we gather in his name, proclaim the gospel, and share the sacrament. Those who experience Jesus' presence now through the means of grace shouldn't be fearful of Jesus' coming in the future."
 - How does this change or add to your answer above? Journal.

Day 5

Reread the entire Scripture:

- Does anything significant or new stand out for you with this reading?
- After studying and meditating on this Scripture, what do you think God might be saying to you?

Reread the entire Scripture again.

- What prayer rises up in you (what would you like to say to God) after reflecting (listening to what God had to say to you) on this Scripture?

Reflection questions:

- "What's worth remembering beyond Sunday...what's the one thing I can imagine for my life this week?" (Karolyn Lewis, WP). In other words, what will I take into my life this week from this Gospel reading? *How would you answer this question?*

- What will I do this week to prepare for Jesus' coming?
- Jesus' world is a different paradigm than our own socio-economic world. How do **we live in the kingdom today** as we are living in our world today? Give examples.

Quote by John Shea in *The Relentless Widow*

"All possessions will eventually be given away or taken from us. The changing nature of life means there is nothing we can permanently hang on to. I see this truth with great clarity every so often, but I do not consistently integrate it into my way of acting. But it prepared me for a more subtle awareness, the realization that life itself was a gift to be given away." (p. 224-225)

Quote by Karolyn Lewis, WP

"We are only three chapters into the travel narrative. It makes sense that Jesus consoles his followers not to fear and follows with the promise of God's kingdom.

That is where it starts, right? The certainty of God's favor, revealed, lived, died, raised, and ascended in Jesus. It is only after this promise that we can imagine any kind of concept of what our treasure might be. Given the choice of treasure first, we are likely to put our hope in achievements, acquisitions, and assets. Yet, when the lack of fear precedes our fear-driven desires for possessions, purchases, and procurements we might actually be able to imagine treasures beyond self-driven determination, self-assessed success, and self-obsessed security.

Being ready for Jesus' second coming is less about any actual time and place and more about imagining Jesus' activity in the world, when and where you least expect it or imagine seeing it. In other words, waiting around, waiting for instructions, is not going to cut it. Fear, treasure, and being prepared is **the** pattern for discipleship. Being without fear, knowing the source of your treasure -- that is, your identity, your worth -- makes it possible to be prepared for and an actual participant in God's kingdom."

Quote by David Lose, WP

"But Jesus does not simply hold out faith as a model and goal, much less as a standard by which to judge us. Rather, Jesus *creates* faith by announcing a promise: Like a parent loves her children deeply and desperately and wants all good things for them, so also is it God's good pleasure to give God's children the kingdom. Promises create a shared expectation about the future and bind together the giver and receiver of the promise in that shared anticipation. Promises create relationship. Promises create hope. Promises create faith. All of our instruction about the Christian life - whether about prayer, money, watchfulness, care of neighbor, and more - are therefore anchored in the gospel promise that it is, indeed, God's good pleasure to give us the kingdom."

Quote by Pastor Brian Stoffregen

"Have we learned how to be prepared for the Son of Man's unexpected coming? Part of being prepared is to expect it ... Christians know Jesus is coming and we are to live as if he were already here: not building up wealth for ourselves, but giving alms (showing mercy), which builds up a treasure in heaven that will not be taken from us."

Psalm 33:12-22

- ¹²Happy is the nation whose God is the LORD, the people whom he has chosen as his heritage.
- ¹³The LORD looks down from heaven; he sees all humankind.
- ¹⁴From where he sits enthroned he watches all the inhabitants of the earth—
- ¹⁵he who fashions the hearts of them all, and observes all their deeds.
- ¹⁶A king is not saved by his great army; a warrior is not delivered by his great strength.
- ¹⁷The war horse is a vain hope for victory, and by its great might it cannot save.
- ¹⁸Truly the eye of the LORD is on those who fear him, on those who hope in his steadfast love,
- ¹⁹to deliver their soul from death, and to keep them alive in famine.
- ²⁰Our soul waits for the LORD; he is our help and shield.
- ²¹Our heart is glad in him, because we trust in his holy name.
- ²²Let your steadfast love, O LORD, be upon us, even as we hope in you.