

Twelfth Sunday after Pentecost
August 7, 2016
St. Luke 12:32-40
Joyful Anticipation for Christ's Sudden Return
Rev. George Ferch

Dearly loved by God in Christ,

"Now faith is being sure of what we hope for and certain of what we do not see." Those words by the writer to the Hebrews in our second lesson are powerful. We children of God do not live by sight. We do not have to see it to believe it. We fully expect the things God's Word says about whatever days we may have beyond today will come to pass.

This was Abraham's faith when God told him he would have a son and his descendants would be as many as the stars in the sky. Abraham believed although humanly speaking this would be impossible for him and Sarah. We apply our spiritual father Abraham's faith to our Savior's words to us St. Luke has recorded. "The Son of Man will come at an hour you do not expect him."

Are you ready? Are you zealously making the proper preparations for when our Master returns? Here are those proper preparations in our **Joyful Anticipation for Christ's Sudden Return**. We know where our treasure is. We are watchful at all times.

Our Father has been pleased to give us the kingdom of God. By God's good pleasure we enjoy the righteousness of Christ, joy, and peace in the Holy Spirit. God has in Jesus Christ exchanged these for our unrighteousness in sin, our sorrow over our guilt, and our fear of being eternally separated from God in hell. God has given us the only things we need. They are the only things that last. Therefore, God says to us, "Do not fear, little flock."

Without fear, we are liberated for joyful anticipation for Christ's sudden return. Have you ever been afraid to get caught doing something wrong by someone suddenly appearing? Maybe your mother or father when you had your hand in the cookie jar. Maybe it was that teacher who suddenly returned unannounced to the classroom. Or, the police car popping up in the rear view mirror. When the Son of Man suddenly returns, he will find us without fear and with our heart set on whatever is our treasure in life.

Our joyful anticipation includes having the right treasure. When you have the right treasure, your heart is set on what is right, not on things it should not be set on. A good illustration is the I  New York t-shirts. That shirt says, New York is my treasure. My heart is in New York no matter where I am. The kingdom of God is my treasure, not possessions My heart is in the kingdom of God even though I am a stranger and pilgrim on earth.

Jesus' words are part of his discourse on not worrying about money and needs like unbelievers worry. So, without fear sell your possessions and give alms to the poor. Get rid of the love of earthly treasures. Provide treasures in heaven for yourselves; forgiveness of sins, new life in Christ, eternal life in heaven; righteousness, joy, and peace in the Holy Spirit. These are the imperishable treasures. They will not run out. They are not subject to decay. No thief can steal them. No moth can eat them. I  the kingdom of God.

Joyful anticipation for Christ's sudden return in the second place is we are watchful at all times. When someone is coming to pick you up to take you out for breakfast, or to the doctor, or to an event, don't you want to be dressed and ready when they arrive? Otherwise, you won't be ready. If they do not wait, you miss out.

In a mini parable, Jesus used just this picture. The servants waiting for their master to return were dressed. They were ready for service. They had their lamps burning in anticipation. So, we are to be dressed and ready for service in Christ's robes of righteousness with our lamps of faith burning when the Son of Man suddenly returns. If we are not ready, we will miss out. Jesus will not wait for us to get ready for salvation after he returns. Now is the time. It will be good for us if Jesus finds us dressed in Christ through faith when he returns.

Then, something amazing happened. "I tell you the truth, he will dress himself to serve, will have them recline at the table, and will come and serve them." This is not man's way but God's. The Son of God took the form of a servant to redeem us from our sins and death. Jesus served us by being perfectly obedient to the law and by giving up his holy life into death on his cross. We have failed to serve God many times, instead choosing to serve our own interests.

When you think about it, God's service to us is true in worship. We are not serving God by being here. God is serving us. We are not doing anything for him. He is doing everything for us. He is feeding us with the rich banquet feast of Word and sacrament. Heaven will not be about what we do for God. Heaven will be about what God will do for us through timeless eternity. He will give us the joy and privilege of being in his presence at his right hand.

Joyful anticipation for Christ's sudden return is being watchful at all times. Jesus reminds us that time is unknown by using the example of a thief. There needs to be constant readiness as if we knew the hour. If the owner knew when the thief was coming, he would be ready. So it is more important to be ready when we do not know. It is not a matter of if it is true or not that Jesus will return. He will. It is a matter of being watchful, to be ready, to be dressed for service at all times.

To be ready means busy in service. We serve our Lord now as we wait. We serve in joyful anticipation and a desire for that glorious life that surely awaits us for eternity with God in heaven. This attitude will keep the believer's heart from becoming attached to earthly treasures. With the apostle John who heard Jesus say, "Yes, I am coming soon," we respond, "Amen. Come, Lord Jesus." Amen <SDG>