

## *Luke 12:32-40, 2016*

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

<sup>35</sup>Be dressed for action and have your lamps lit; <sup>36</sup>be 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. <sup>37</sup>Blessed 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. <sup>38</sup>If he comes during the middle of the night, or near dawn, and finds them so, blessed are those slaves.

<sup>39</sup>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. <sup>40</sup>You also must be ready, for the Son of Man is coming at an unexpected hour."

## *Luke 12:32-40, 2016*

Our Old Testament reading from Genesis for this week begins with,

“Do not be afraid, Abram.”

And Jesus begins our gospel message with these words:

“Do not be afraid little flock.”

Comforting words of God from opposite ends of the bible, given in very different settings, but which connect a common thread throughout the scriptures.

God has made a promise, and you can count on God to make good on that promise.

But these words, “Do not be afraid...” regardless of who says them; do they give the peace and assurance you are looking for?

After all, what does it take to not be afraid?

What was your response to the last time someone said to you, “Don’t be afraid or fear not or don’t worry about it. It is all going to be okay?”

You were probably left wondering how you could put aside your cares, worries and fears.

Is Jesus just looking for self resignation born of a hopeless and helpless view of the future?

It is for sure that is not the case.

He gives instructions. This is a time for preparation.

Jesus says, sell your possessions, give alms, make purses, be dressed for action, keep your lamps lighted, wait, be ready.

But you notice that these instructions are set in the parentheses of the promise.

First He says, "...it is your Father's good pleasure to give you the kingdom."

Actually if you go back to the original language and translate what you get is,

"Do not be afraid little flock, for your Father has chosen gladly to give you the kingdom."

The verbs are all past tense.

**It is done.**

This changes the message from one which holds back the kingdom at least partially

to one which fully reveals that the kingdom has been given and God our Father is glad He has done that.

Then after the instructions Jesus restates the promise and tells us by what means the promise is fulfilled.

"The Son of Man is coming."

This is not a cause or occasion for hopeless and helpless resignation to a future that is suspect at best.

But, you still have your doubts when you look around and see what is going on in the world today,  
and that is okay because you are in good company.

You may remember I talked about making this world more heaven like because we live in the promise of God to give us the kingdom today, tomorrow and forever.

You have the kingdom of God already.

Having, living in the kingdom of God is living in a continuum of this life and the next,

and that gives hope and promise for a life worth living.

The story from Genesis shows us that you stand in the company of Abram when you doubt and are not convinced that God has done anything for you, or will do anything.

You remember in that story Abram and Sarai had been called by God to a long journey which God had promised would include their having children and land and many blessings from God.

Many years had passed and many miles had been traveled and still nothing of God's promise had been received or realized

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Sarai remains barren and Abram comes to this pivotal moment in his faith and trust in God.

Abram is worried there will be no change and after hearing God's words in a vision that are supposed to comfort he stands before God and challenges Him with his doubt.

Abram isn't passive about his position, nor does he resign to peaceful, pious acceptance of the situation.

Abram's conviction is hard fought and deeply argued.

If Sarai's bareness prevails the promise is null and void because without heirs there can be no land and at this point Abram is pushed to the limit.

But, Abram and Sarai, as you know finally had children and in fact gave birth to generations of descendants.

Along the way Abram and Sarai stood in the continuing hope and faith that God would keep his promises.

This is the message of our second lesson for this weekend, our lesson from Hebrews.

That passage speaks about faith and cites Abraham as the example of living in faith in God's promises while;

- Living in a foreign land,

- Living as nomads in tents
- Looking forward to the city that has foundations whose architect and builder is God.
- Looking forward to having descendants, as many as the stars of heaven...

It was “By faith that Abraham obeyed...”

When I first read this passage this week I was in a pretty dark place.

I was afraid of what the future is going to be like,

- the future of our country,
- the future that our political system will leave us with,
- the condition our world will be left in for our younger generations.

I was brokenhearted by the things I have seen and heard, going on in our community, the nation and the world, the violence, the hatred, the division.

But somehow, just in the reading of this passage from Hebrews I was pulled out of that frame of mind to a different place; a place with hope, a place with confidence, a place where God’s joy was restored, a place where my faith in God was restored, because I was reminded that faith is

“the assurance of things hoped for, the conviction of things not seen...an understanding that the worlds were prepared by the word of God...and as we desire a better country, a heavenly one, God is not ashamed to be called our God and has indeed prepared a city for us.”

There is the restoration of faith, my faith, and I hope yours.

This faith seems like such a fleeting thing some times. You wonder, “How can this faith be sustained?” as if the responsibility and the power to accomplish this is upon you.

But this is not how faith works.

Faith is not about you and your works, your efforts, your success or failure to hold on to it and keep it strong.

The way we understand faith is as a gift from God.

It is God’s faith alive in us that keeps us.

Martin Luther wrote this about faith.

Here it should be noted that the little words “Thy faith” and “Thy righteousness” do not refer to the faith and the righteousness with which God believes and is righteous, as some have thought, but to the grace whereby God works faith in us and makes us righteous.<sup>1</sup>

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<sup>1</sup>Luther, M. (1999, c1958). *Vol. 14: Luther's works, vol. 14 : Selected Psalms III* (J. J. Pelikan, H. C. Oswald & H. T. Lehmann, Ed.). Luther's Works (Ps 143:2). Saint Louis: Concordia Publishing House.

It is God's grace that gives you the faith at work in you, and that makes you right with God again.

It was God's faith alive and working in me when I read this passage from Hebrews that made me right with God again.

Martin Luther is attributed with saying that it was God's faith that saw him through the time when his daughter died and he had to bury her, not his own

So it is not up to you, but for you.

If we understand faith rightly we understand it as God's gift. I know you know the Apostle's Creed and have said it many times.

But do you remember what the third article where we profess our belief in the Holy Spirit means?

Remember?

I cannot by my own reason or strength believe in Jesus Christ my Lord or come to him, but instead the Holy Spirit calls me through the gospel, enlightens my with his gifts, makes me holy and keeps me in the true faith,

just as he calls, gathers, enlightens and makes holy the whole Christian Church on earth and keeps it in the one true faith.

It is God's faith empowered by the Holy Spirit that is alive in you and works in you,  
that is alive in the church, the community of faith for the sake of the world.

It is God's faith given through the Holy Spirit at your baptism that calls you to the scriptures, speaks to you in prayer, gathers you here as community to give thanks and praise,

and brings you to Christ's table of grace to be forgiven your past, present and future,  
to be strengthened for daily life  
and to take away your fear.

Do not be afraid little flock,

"...for your Father has chosen gladly to give you the kingdom."

"The Son of Man is coming, today, tomorrow and forever."