



Let the words of my mouth and the meditation of my heart be acceptable to you, O Lord, my rock and my redeemer. **AMEN**

Our Gospel text today again comes from Luke. And it is one that makes it pretty obvious that Luke likes to put together saying of Jesus in chapters of his gospel writing. That actually was a common practice when writing all those years ago. Matthew is possibly the one that climbs to new heights by doing this in his reiterating of the Sermon on the Mount. All the ideas are grouped together and then set in one dissertation. And I have always thought that Matthew was better at that than Luke. And today's text is a great example.

Theses 9 verses just don't seem to go together. So how do we make sense of them in our context today. We start off hearing, "Do not be afraid, little flock, for it is your Father's good pleasure to give you the kingdom." We move on to "For where your treasure is, there your heart will be also." And next we hear, "Be dressed for action and have your lamps lit". Our text concludes with, "You must be ready, for the Son of Man is coming at an unexpected hour." WOW, you would think that it is a preacher's delight, many ideas to choose from, but also hard to pull all together.

For this morning I would like to start by thinking about the opening statement, "Do not be afraid, little flock, for it is your Father's good pleasure to give you the kingdom."

Are you familiar with "Antique Roadshow"? It has been on PBS for 25 years boasting to help "Discover American's Hidden Treasures". It is one of the earliest forms of reality TV. Over 6 million viewers watch each Monday on local public broadcast stations where people bring their antiques treasures and experts tell them about the provenance of the items they've brought. I am sure you have heard stories over the years of people buying a pocket watch at a rummage sale for a quarter and it turns out to be worth thousands of dollars. Or the unusual painting found in the attic that is worth millions. Founded on the principal that one person's trash is another man's treasure, the experts give an estimate of value of the items brought to them. Most of these items no doubt get sold so the owners can pursue their dreams with their newfound wealth. Is it true then that our heart's desire forms the

basis upon which our entire life is built? Our focus, our purpose, and our meaning in life inform the things that matter to us?

The centering of our hearts is at the core of our being. If our heart's treasure is personal power, then that will become the foundation we seek. We are then driven to gain power in any way we can.

If riches and possessions are the treasures of our heart, then our lives will be focused on things that show our wealth. We will always be on the lookout for one more thing, one more possession. We will need more and more money to buy more and more stuff. Sounds like our lesson on greed from last week.

If beauty and looks are important we will seek the latest and greatest plastic surgery and designer outfits. If victory in sports is our treasure, we may be obsessed with practicing our skills. If family success is our guiding treasure, we might continue to have many children to put on display and dress them all alike. But folks these are all temporal things. They are all just like the possessions, the stuff we talked about last week that cannot give us satisfaction or abundant and eternal life.

Our Father in heaven, we are told by Jesus, encourages us to center our hearts on what really matters. We are to look toward the eternal. The truth is that our Father in heaven gets pleasure in giving you the kingdom. We heard earlier in Luke in Chapter 6 that we should, "Give and it will be given to you. A good measure, pressed down, shaken together, running over, will be put into your lap; for the measure you give will be the measure you get back." Folks, we do not need to worry about all these worldly matters. Our loving and good God provides us with daily bread. God is good and God provides. If we have our heart grounded in the assurance of God's goodness and faithfulness, then these other worldly treasures don't really matter. No one can steal our true treasure and no moth can destroy. We need not fear that we will lose what we have built up.

"Do not fear, little flock". That's you. You need not fear about making the mortgage payment. You need not fear about your health. You need not fear your savings will not last your lifetime. You need not fear your children will stray from what you taught them. Easy to say, but easier to hear the world say just the opposite. Yeah right, but that won't pay the bills, that won't keep the doctor away, or that won't take care of my children.

Our other two readings for this morning have that covered. In Genesis Abram was also told not to be afraid. Rather he was to have faith, and all will be right. Abram, with no offspring believed God would deliver and it was so. God gave him more descendants than the stars in the sky. Abram believed God and "the Lord reckoned it to him as righteousness." Our New Testament lesson from Hebrews continues to tell the story of Abraham's shining example of faith. God called him to go to a far-away land and Abraham obeyed. God blessed him with descendants to make a great nation. Notably, when Abraham followed God's call, he was already an old, old man married to an old woman, Sarah. But Abraham believed in the

promises of God and put God's word in his heart. The promise grew there in His heart so no fear could permeate and destroy his trust in God.

You see, trusting in God's faithfulness allows us to live freely and without fear. It allows us to venture in faith with blessing enough to share with others. In fact, without fear we are ready and able to respond to needs around us. That is part of what our Gospel text calls having our lamps lit. When opportunity comes our way, we will be there to respond.

In September, all ELCA congregations are called to participate in "Gods Work, Our Hands" Sunday. It is suggested that we all get involved in helping out our local communities. This year on September 10<sup>th</sup> our congregation is going to work at the local food pantry, "The Lord's Cupboard." Many of you have over the years volunteered to pack back packs for the local school or worked on Saturdays making up boxes for the clients that come for food. Well, this is an opportunity for all of us to get a taste of service to those in our own town that are food insecure. I hope that you will be dressed for action and have your lamps lit that day and come to help.

Here at CTS, I have seen over the years many other examples of our hearts for mission work. Quilting comes to mind, putting kits together for Lutheran World Relief, helping a homeless man find shelter and food, collecting Bibles and religious books to be sent to other parts of the world. The examples are many and some stay focused right here at church. I saw an amazing example of enthusiastic help at VBS on Tuesday. There were 6 congregation members that gave up their day to chaperone and help kids learn about being a good neighbor, a Good Samaritan. Many, many times we have shown that we live out our mission of being "Christians Serving God by Serving Others." But we cannot stop there. We must always be ready to help when the need arises. You will be blessed by God when your action equals your heart's desire to love your neighbor as yourself.

So today I hope you will join me in seeking first the kingdom of God. Forget about Antiques making you rich because you are already rich in the promise of God our Father where it is His pleasure to give us the kingdom. And stay ready, keep the faith for Christ will return at an unexpected hour. **AMEN**