

Proper 15 C
St. Luke 12:49-56
August 14, 2016
St. George's Bolton
Fr. Chris

Please Notice the Clouds!

"When you see a cloud rising in the west, you immediately say, 'It is going to rain'; and so it happens. And when you see the south wind blowing, you say, 'There will be scorching heat'; and it happens."

Weather watching. We are beginning a season during which we will be paying more and more attention to the weather in these parts. It really seems like this summer has been hotter than others, and to underscore that we have also had severe weather already in the state just a few days ago with a tornado touching down in North Haven. We are now embarking on hurricane season, and this year it is forecast that we will have some 17 named storms, and then at least four of them are supposed to be severe. In the law of averages, you might say we are owed one of those storms, however, we will see. Gee, aren't I a pot of cheer?

Global warming, or the more politically correct title, "climate change," is becoming harder and harder to dispute. Something is changing and we had better pay attention. Not only must we adapt to the changes in the weather, we must also consider our role in the changes taking place. Many are ready to deny our involvement. As Christians, we realize we are stewards of God's creation and should care for it very carefully. We have a responsibility to be good stewards and pass on to the next generation a planet that is

healthy and free of man made complications which would put it at risk.

Just yesterday I visited Elephant Rock Beach in south-eastern Rhode Island with Lynn. It started out as a wonderful day with clear blue skies. The temperature climbed to an unheard of record of 105 degrees by late afternoon. By 5:00 pm the sky started to darken and the cloud cover thickened. Thus began, at first, what was a trickle of sand and sun aficionados exiting the beach, passing by our beach chairs as we read our favorite books without a care in the world or a thought to the hour. The skies continued to grow darker, and the number of fleeing beach goers increased and so we looked at one another and decided it would be prudent for us to leave also, reluctantly, I might add. The rest is history. Most of you heard the violent thunderstorms last evening. Well some of them were threatening our beach-haven as we prepared to leave with their rumblings and bright flashes from the midst of the black clouds overhead. We did know what to do with the storm clouds increasing above us and that it was sensible to retreat from the 105 degree scorching heat.

One cannot help but notice inclement weather. In the event of such weather, it would be prudent to be prepared to take action to be safe and to have the supplies on hand to cope with the consequences of such bad weather.

Just as we can take note of the weather predictions and storm clouds, we should also be aware of the dark clouds gathering in our own lives and prepare to deal with them before they erupt into storms. Preventive care begins with our spiritual lives. Imagine if you neglected to prepare your home for a hurricane...and then imagine neglecting to prepare yourself spiritually when the tornado of heartbreak hits you, or the flood

of despair from personal failure; or the cyclone sucking you in because you can no longer swim and keep your head above water independently in your personal life: you need someone to save you, as you discover you can't save yourself! But who will save you? Where is the lifeguard, the first responder?

We should be aware of what is going on all around us. The spiritual weather report calls attention to the mission opportunities which present themselves to us each day. We should note the times and the opportunities we have to help others and not close our eyes to human need around us. Ignoring these opportunities is at our own peril as each time we turn our eyes away, we harden our own hearts, infecting them with a real spiritual heart disease that can destroy us in the end.

In a larger sense, Jesus is encouraging us to be mindful of what time it is spiritually in our own lives as well as in the scheme of human history. The hour is getting late, yet the opportunity to change our lives is ever before us as long as we draw a breath. So often in the New Testament and in the practice of the church, the question is, *what time is it?* We ask the same thing in Advent each year. It is a question which should be ever before us.

Christians are those who should live each day as though it were there last. It is a way to reset your priorities. It is a way to take stock of what time it is and what is truly important. So much of life passes by us and is forgotten in the piles of trivialities of which we should take no notice and which have little import. I am talking about how we spend so much of our time, and not just in front of the TV set, but also the computer or your smart phone. And a lot of what we do or say is of little consequence. Our lives were meant to be of some consequence, especially to our loved

ones around us. Our time is a precious treasure and commodity which should not be squandered foolishly or wastefully.

It used to be people who spent money and time on preparing for future calamities were regarded as on the lunatic fringe. Imagine how Noah must have felt as he built his ark. Preppers and prepping are become more mainstream these days, and how many of you have one of those TV Weather apps on your smart phones?

Yes, prepping can cause divisions in a family, and even in a neighborhood and a community, not to mention a nation. Prepping can be a divisive issue. Being prepared is a consequence and factor in knowing what time it is. Christians are repeatedly called to be *Preppers*. And we can tell what time it is by noticing all the clouds gathering in our lives, not just the fluffy ones overhead.

Oh-and who do you suppose is the first responder, the lifeguard, the one who is ready to save us in our peril? That would be our God. And God is closer to you than those clouds above! AMEN