### “Your Father’s Good Pleasure” Steve Finlan for The First Church, August 10, 2025

**Hebrews 11:1–3, 13–16**

1Now faith is the assurance of things hoped for, the conviction of things not seen. 2 Indeed, by faith our ancestors received approval. 3 By faith we understand that the worlds were prepared by the word of God, so that what is seen was made from things that are not visible. . .

13 [Many faithful people] died in faith without having received the promises, but from a distance they saw and greeted them. They confessed that they were strangers and foreigners on the earth, 14 for people who speak in this way make it clear that they are seeking a homeland. 15 If they had been thinking of the land that they had left behind, they would have had opportunity to return. 16 But as it is, they desire a better homeland, that is, a heavenly one. Therefore God is not ashamed to be called their God; indeed, he has prepared a city for them.

**Luke 12: 29–34**

29“And do not keep seeking what you are to eat and what you are to drink, and do not keep worrying. 30 For it is the nations of the world that seek all these things, and your Father knows that you need them. 31 Instead, seek his kingdom, and these things will be given to you as well. 32Do not be afraid, little flock, for it is your Father’s good pleasure to give you the kingdom. 33 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. 34 For where your treasure is, there your heart will be also.

What mood will I conjure for this sermon? Should it be the tragic but hopeful mood of Hebrews, which speaks of martyrs and of people who had hope but could not see their hope fulfilled until they reached the afterlife? Or should it be the serene mood suggested by Jesus’ speech that assures his disciples that the Father really wants to give them the kingdom? Should it be the cosmic vision present in both passages, in Hebrews speaking of the Word that created the worlds (11:3), in Jesus speaking of making spiritual treasures in heaven that cannot wear out? Or should I allow all these moods and modes to appear, so we can feel them all?

Let’s spend a moment with the Hebrews passage. Hebrews 11:3 is one of the five places in the New Testament that indicate that the actual creator of this world is Jesus. It says “the worlds were prepared by the word of God.” The Word is one of the names for Jesus himself, as we see especially in the prologue of John, “In the beginning was the Word, and the Word was with God, and the Word was God” (John 1:1). “Word” is used the same way in Hebrews.

It is just a passing point in Hebrews 11, meant to show that the visible things were made by the invisible, which leads into a discussion of faith, which, though invisible, *leads* people in their lives. This includes martyrs, mentioned in verses 35–37, which we didn’t read. The author says people who had faith were basically foreigners on earth (11:13); again, it says later in the chapter “they were commended for their faith, [but] did not receive what was promised” (11:39); their true country was a heavenly one; God has prepared a heavenly city for them (11:16). So faith is not only powerful for us on earth, but it points us toward heaven.

This passage has a romantic, slightly heartbreaking feeling to it, since the faithful people did not see their destination in their lifetimes, though they do see it in their afterlives. The gospel passage, on the other hand, is sunny and optimistic: Don’t worry about material things; your Father knows what you need. Instead, seek his kingdom, and these lesser things will be given to you as well (Luke 12:29–31). Then comes that great line, “Do not be afraid, little flock, for it is your Father’s good pleasure to give you the kingdom” (12:32), which shows the generous attitude of God. That leads us to focus on heaven, on the spiritual treasures we can build up there. We don’t have to pass some test. Our faith leads to the accumulation of treasures.

So, what are spiritual treasures? I think they are spiritual values and achievements that will endure forever, that “no moth destroys” (Luke 12:33). Spiritual progress, although we may not see it, is a very real thing, and what you achieve in that direction endures forever. Further, by concentrating on spiritual things, your heart will be focused: “For where your treasure is, there your heart will be also” (12:34). Heart and mind, faith and love, work together.

Do you see how sunny and cheerful the mood of the Jesus passage is? Jesus’ saying doesn’t have the tinge of sadness or longing that the Hebrews passage has, because he is saying that if our treasure is in heaven, that treasure is also a *present* possession; it is where our heart is *now*. And so, don’t worry, don’t be afraid, don’t be anxious. Make the future promise a present possession. Bring heaven into earth. Bring eternity into the mundane present, with lovingkindness. Back in chapter 4, Hebrews had spoken about entering into the eternal rest *now*: “we who have believed are entering that rest” (Heb 4:3). This experience includes release from anxious haste, a renewal of energy, and a heightening of inner peace. It means being aware of having an inner power that comes from God.

How did people feel after an encounter with Jesus? Empowered, encouraged, healed, set back up upon their feet. Jonathan Foster writes “if there were one word big enough to contain the hope of the kingdom of heaven, what would that word be? Wouldn’t it be *love*? Not kitschy-valentines-card . . . love [but love] as in the elderly man stooping over to kiss his bride of sixty years as she lies in the hospice bed. . . Love, as in one who gives up power to identify with the powerless” (Foster, *The Reconstructionist*, 104–5). He goes on to say love is often “breaking our hearts, but in doing so, releasing hope deep within us. Love is our hope” (107). What we need, he says, is “the *unruly rule of love*. . . what we really need is a friend who sticks closer than a brother” (110). Let Jesus be that friend. Let your faith lead you to what happens next!