

**Life Giving Lessons: From Here to Eternity: Ready or Not?**  
**Luke 12:32-48**  
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**Luke 12:32-48 New International Version (NIV)**

<sup>32</sup>“Do not be afraid, little flock, for your Father has been pleased to give you the kingdom. <sup>33</sup>Sell your possessions and give to the poor. Provide purses for yourselves that will not wear out, a treasure in heaven that will never fail, where no thief comes near and no moth destroys. <sup>34</sup>For where your treasure is, there your heart will be also.

**Watchfulness**

<sup>35</sup>“Be dressed ready for service and keep your lamps burning, <sup>36</sup>like servants waiting for their master to return from a wedding banquet, so that when he comes and knocks they can immediately open the door for him. <sup>37</sup>It will be good for those servants whose master finds them watching when he comes. Truly I tell you, he will dress himself to serve, [he]will have them recline at the table and will come and wait on them. <sup>38</sup>It will be good for those servants whose master finds them ready, even if he comes in the middle of the night or toward daybreak. <sup>39</sup>But understand 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, because the Son of Man will come at an hour when you do not expect him.”

<sup>41</sup>Peter asked, “Lord, are you telling this parable to us, or to everyone?”

<sup>42</sup>The Lord answered, “Who then is the faithful and wise manager, whom the master puts in charge of his servants to give them their food allowance at the proper time? <sup>43</sup>It will be good for that servant whom the master finds doing so when he returns. <sup>44</sup>Truly I tell you, he will put him in charge of all his possessions. <sup>45</sup>But suppose the servant says to himself, ‘My master is taking a long time in coming,’ and he then begins to beat the other servants, both men and women, and to eat and drink and get drunk. <sup>46</sup>The master of that servant will come on a day when he does not expect him and at an hour he is not aware of. He will cut him to pieces and assign him a place with the unbelievers.

<sup>47</sup>“The servant who knows the master’s will and does not get ready or does not do what the master wants will be beaten with many blows.<sup>48</sup>But the one who does not know and does things deserving punishment will be beaten with few blows. From everyone who has been given much, much will be

demanded; and from the one who has been entrusted with much, much more will be asked.

Last week I began by asking the burning house question: If your house is on fire, people and pets are safe, what would you make every effort to save? This question gets at the heart of what is most precious or valuable to us.

Jesus warned us against greed, translated from the Greek as "grasping ambition".

Greed is more than a lack of contentment with what God has provided. This type of greed might better be understood as avarice.

Chaucer defines avarice as "keeping and withholding such things as one has, when there is no need to do so." Avarice is the clenched fist sort of greed, the one that holds on, and holds back.

Then Jesus told the parable of the rich fool who was blessed with an immense harvest, and rather than share it, decided that he'd just tear down his small barn and build a bigger one. The only problem? Or rather his biggest problem was that he died suddenly and had done nothing to lay up lasting eternal treasures in heaven.

So this week we continue on with the same chapter in Luke's gospel.

Before Jesus tells his next parable he prefaces it with this:

"Don't be afraid, little flock," says Jesus, "for your Father has been pleased to give you the kingdom."

Here Jesus is taking us to the heart of the matter, to the center of your life and mine.

**Don't be afraid!!!**

**We acknowledged last week that one reason we fear is that we can become conditioned by life experiences –such as those who lived through the Depression—to live in fear of not having enough. The result is that people live with an expectation of scarcity which results in fear. This is the *exact opposite* of what our generous God wants for us, as God promises to provide for ALL our needs, and to do so sufficiently.**

**Here Jesus wants to reassure us of this fact—*fear not little flock*—for God’s deepest desire is to give us God’s very best!! No need to worry, right?**

**Honestly, some of us are world class worriers. If worrying was an Olympic sport, we’d be vying for the Gold!**

**But worry –fear and anxiety are not what God desires for us.**

The problem is that we *like* being afraid and anxious. We *almost need* to be afraid and anxious. Professor Alyce McKenzie leads a weekly prayer group of seminary students every year. During Lent they did a unit on the subject of fasting. Since some of the class had health issues that made fasting (from food) problematic, she assigned them (and herself) the task of fasting from anxious thoughts for a week. (Sounds like a worthy exercise to me!)

One student raised her hand and asked, **“Dr. McKenzie, if we fast from anxious thoughts, what else will we have to think about?”** Everyone laughed nervously. She looked embarrassed, because she wasn’t kidding.

Fasting from anxious thoughts is unthinkable. Because we believe that if we don’t maintain our defenses, if we don’t keep anxiety at bay by patrolling the perimeters of our thoughts and lives, something bad will surely happen.

The deepest faith many of us have is faith in our fears. And I don’t mean the fear of the Lord (the deep awe and reverence for God) that the Bible tells us repeatedly is the beginning of wisdom. I mean the faith that, as long as we are hyper-concerned or anxious, we can in some fashion, keep chaos at bay. It’s counter-intuitive, but if I worry it feels like I am doing something that is somehow preventative.

***Unbelief is not the opposite of faith. Fear and anxiety are, because they betray a lack of trust in God and God’s total adequacy and, and focus instead on ourselves and our inadequacy.***

Now Jesus tells a parable about servants who are busy running around doing peripheral stuff, not giving a lot of thought to the master who has gone off to get married. But when he comes back, even in the middle of the night, oh what a time this will be! This will be a celebration. He will dress up like a

servant, get *them* to recline at table, and *wait on them* hand and foot. *He will get them to share his joy and enter fully into his celebration!*

***This is unprecedented—masters don't become servants! This is revolutionary, but this is what God's Kingdom is all about!***

What a time this will be!

The question is: Are they and will you and I--be ready for the Master's return?

Any Boy Scouts or former scouts among us today? What is the Boy Scout motto? Even I know it, and I've never been a Boy Scout: "BE PREPARED!"

How does one prepare?

King County has a huge billboard on Pacific Hwy in Des Moines that reads: Are You Prepared? The visual is a photograph which depicts a building damaged by an earthquake. The point is: Make a plan NOW so that when disaster strikes, you'll be prepared. You'll have some provisions while you await further assistance.

The point of Jesus' parable is, the servants of the Master are to keep on keeping on—remaining vigilant at their assigned tasks, rather than slacking and sitting around. There was work to be done, preparation to be made—no matter when the Master returns.

A thief does not send an announcement with a "save this date" card! He comes unannounced and unexpectedly.

Jesus **has** told us that he will return unexpectedly. Will you --will I --be ready?

Like the servants in the parable, are we focused on the very reason why we live and work in the master's house?

To share in his joy?

To belong to him and to know his love?

Or are they and we busy with peripheral matters – acquiring and maintaining a bunch of stuff/possessions--which keep us from understanding **whose** we really are!?

This is the point of this parable and in our personal stories—

What is the central concern of your life and mine?

What is the primary focus of our lives—how we spend our time and money and energy? Is our life consumed with “things” or with Kingdom values and relationships—with that which will last far beyond the next fashion or fad, but for eternity?

As Jesus’ servants and followers, we know that God’s Kingdom is not “in a galaxy far, far away”, but it is present to us in the here and now, just as surely as the King himself is present with us through the Holy Spirit! It is already a reality, as well as a yet-to-come-eventuality!

For that reason, the center of our lives, the place from which our truest motivations arise, is the joy of knowing and being loved by the Master—the Master who shares **his** joy and keeps us focused: free from fear, worry, anxiety, and avarice.

Experiencing—sharing in the Joy of the Master—motivates us to stay focused on what is important and lasting.

This is the joy which takes away—minimizes the fear and daily reminds us **whose** we are.

It is the joy which makes us ready to take on the challenges of a new day.

It is the joy which assures us that nothing can separate us from the love of God in Christ Jesus.

It is the joy which makes us generous beyond belief and keeps us expectant.

Will you be ready when the Master returns?

This is the joy of serving Jesus!