

**Church of All Nations
Sunday August 10, 2025
Luke 12:32-40**

Today's passage starts off urging us to not fear and goes on to teach about possessions in verses that sound very similar to last week's reading and ends up urging us to be ready for the coming of the Lord. The final verses in today's passage has all the feel of one of those readings highlighted during Advent each year. You know, those get ready, be alert, do not be caught asleep readings that are to prepare us pre Christmas for the "at any time" coming of the Lord into our midst.

Jesus begins with a comforting word: "Do not be afraid!" and names us with the tender words "Little flock". But really they are concluding words from teaching about being free from worry for if even the birds and the lilies and the grass have all they need how much more you ... beloved of God, recipients of the good gift of the kingdom. So give up all your fretful worrying and joyfully receive in order that you may joyfully give.

There is a lot of assuring people not to be afraid in scripture. Do not be afraid is the most repeated refrain or in some variation

Maybe they were a fearful lot in that time and in that part of the world. You think?, or is it more likely that fear is simply a universal human experience? Elsewhere, Jesus has told us not to be afraid in the middle of a raging storm, or in the dark of night, or when he confronts us like a ghost after resurrection. As the first words spoken after the resurrection of Jesus the angels tell the disciples not to be afraid.

Some things we do well to be scared of, or at least wary. All sorts of physical dangers, warnings of unsafe practices. But there does reach a point where things move from sensible fear of a specific situation to simply becoming a fearful person. At that point we become rather self protective and consumed, inward looking, suspicious of others. That is an unhealthy life restricting fear.

The way our passage is framed today fear quickly moves to teaching about our "possessions," our "purses" and "treasure."

³²"Do not be afraid, little flock, for it is your Father's good pleasure to give you the kingdom. ³³Sell 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. ³⁴For where your treasure is, there your heart will be also.

Having as your treasure things, objects, money and possessions, or even your status, your work, means you are always going to be vulnerable to the fear it may all be taken away from you. And then whether or not that happens that fear is going to begin to shape your life - your values, who are your friends,

where your loyalties lie. Jesus put it where your treasure is there your heart will be.

It was not just Jesus who used the metaphor or image of treasure and the powerful effect it will have on our character.

In much ancient myth we read of a dragon protecting a treasure. **Show slides of dragon protecting golden treasure**

The treasure or "gold" was a metaphor for the objective or goal that the hero, usually a knight, was trying to obtain. It's simply meant to represent something of great value, gold being an object easily understood to be universally valuable. So we get the classic archetype of a human (the hero), trying to obtain something of value (the gold), but an obstacle, usually in the form of an embodiment of evil (The Dragon) stands in their way.

Over time, this archetype naturally evolved as fantasy became more commonplace in literature to the point where The Dragon was a literal dragon, not just a metaphor. And because of the long standing association with them guarding gold, the personalities of dragons became such that they were almost always described as greedy, selfish and dangerous creatures of the highest degree. A short step to equating those qualities with evil, and warning against the trap of falling into them, lest you become a dragon yourself and succumb to the temptations of the devil.

Jesus doesn't warn of a literal dragons but urges us to see our treasure as in heaven and not to be self sabotaging our eternal souls by pursuit of money for its own sake. Jesus is centered on receiving what God has given us. us.

And that is the Kingdom, reign of God. Treasure – and he goes on to tell parables of the person discovering the pearl of great price and the buried treasure. In those parables what is at the forefront is joy.

Luke's gospel which stresses the radical nature of following Jesus who befriends the outcast is also the gospel that most presses home the point that the gospel is joyful; not to say this matter of being a disciple is easy and simple but it does bring home to us if the joy has gone – stop. Stop; pause and ask where the joy has gone. When we resist this we resist our own salvation.

The faith that will inspire others is fixated on joy, on fulfillment, on grace or else it is not gospel. And so we arrive quickly at the paradox that the gospel is both about giving away everything to receive the kingdom, but the dominant image of the reign of God is the abundance of a feast. In that ambivalence is found the grace of the gospel. That which we desire above all else, that which we pursue with all our energy is precisely that which we can never earn. That which can only be received.

Do not be afraid, little flock. Collective. We cannot do any of this stuff as isolated individuals. We sink or swim together on this. We are church, body of Christ and any existence we have as individuals assume we are first the body of Christ.