

## **Don't Just Stand There, Do Something**

**Luke 12:32-40**

**August 7, 2010 (11<sup>th</sup> Sunday After Pentecost)**

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I'd like to begin this morning with a question...How would you live your life differently if there was no such thing as fear? When you stop to think about it, you often choose to do things or not do things, simply because you are afraid of what might or might not happen. So, what if fear was no obstacle? Wouldn't that radically change things?

When I was about five years old, my family lived in an apartment in an old Victorian house. The apartment was on the main floor and my bedroom was in the back of the house. It had a door that went out to the backyard. That door made me terrified! What if someone tried to break in? What if the Boogie Man came and took me? No one would even know that I was gone! What if, what if, what if...some nights if I heard a noise, I would freeze in my bed, I would try not to move a muscle. Except that My eyes were wide open and feverishly moving around the room, while the rest of my body laid perfectly still. I couldn't move, I didn't DARE move. I couldn't even get up to make sure the door was locked. And I prayed! Fear rendered me helpless. Eventually, I would drift off to sleep and it all went away. The next morning I would wake up, grateful to be alive one more day and I would come to my senses, there was no thief ready to break in and there was NO SUCH THING as the Boogie Man to come and take me. It was all in my head.

Yet, fear has that power over us at times, does it not? Whether we craft scenarios in our heads of what might be that draws us into fear, or situations in our lives have given us some very real reasons to fear, we can be immobilized by it...helplessly hoping that it will all go away or that we can just sleep it off. But this is no way to live.

This is why Jesus' first words this morning in Luke's gospel are good news for us. "Do not be afraid, little flock." "Don't be afraid"...Jesus told his disciples this a lot throughout their time together. He said this frequently because as these folks followed Jesus, they kept getting more than they bargained for. They were living in uncertain times, it wasn't exactly a powerful

position in the Roman society to be a poor Jewish fisherman, like Peter and John or even a tax collector like Matthew. He may have had more money than the fisherman, but he didn't have any more power. They had given up that not so honorable life up for a life of following a man of God, not knowing where their next meal would come from or what Holy, yet bizarre thing would happen next. Powerful things did started happening, they cured people, they cast out demons in his name, more and more people started to follow them everywhere and they started hearing that the Romans were getting nervous about what Jesus had been doing. They even started talking about killing him. And besides that, Jesus himself seemed determined to confront them in Jerusalem. The world as they knew it was being turned upside down. And yet, Jesus call was unwavering, "Do not be afraid, little flock. For it is the Father's GOOD PLEASURE to give you the kingdom."

We are living in uncertain times; it seems that the world is changing faster than we can keep up. Customs and priorities have changed from what they were 30 or 40 or 50 years ago. We experience a sense of grief and yearning for what was, with no clear sense of what will be. The economy is still unsettled, the chasm between political left and right seem to be irreconcilable, we are restless for stability, but none seems to be present. Yet in the midst of all this seeming chaos rings the sound of Jesus voice, "Do not be afraid little flock. For it is the Father's GOOD PLEASURE to give you the kingdom."

But when and where?! You might be asking. And this is where the fear starts to dissipate. God is bringing a new hope, a new word, a fresh breath, a different reality into our anxiety filled, fast paced world – RIGHT NOW. There is no need to wait and no reason to delay. God's kingdom is coming to us today and there is a place for you.

It is in God's design for the church to be a part of God's kingdom, God's reality every day in all that we do. So, in light of Jesus promise that it is God's good pleasure to give us the kingdom, let's return to that original question I asked..."How would you live your life differently, if there was no such thing as fear?" In faith, there IS nothing to fear, no fear of death or hell or doing the wrong thing, just joy and grace in what God has given us. So how do we live in the kingdom? How do we embrace this gift that is given to us in faith? It's just too good to stand

idly by, doing nothing. Be alert, be ready, not for Jesus to come and whisk you out of this world and into some far flung heaven, but for Jesus to bring you more fully into this life into all the blessings of this world. You see, God does not only free us *from* anxiety regarding our relationship with God. We are also freed *for* life in this world. We are freed from fear of scarcity so that we can be generous with others. We are freed from the fear of condemnation so that we too can forgive others. We are freed from the fear of falling short, of failing, of being unacceptable so that we can live for our neighbors, sharing with others the good news that God is pleased to give us – each and every one of us – the kingdom.

So, don't just stand there, get ready for action because the kingdom of heaven, God's joyful will is coming here, and you just don't know when it will show up. Jesus says, place your treasure in the realm of God, so that not only your heart but that your whole life may also be there.

By the faith that is alive in us, we are witnesses and *participants* in God's good pleasure. Martin Luther called this the New Obedience which we are called into through baptism that because of God's absolute mercy, we who have received God's mercy can't help but do good things, to love our neighbor, to serve as servants not only in the church but out in the community. Luther even went so far to say that if good works did not follow our faith, that faith was false and empty. So be ready, be alert. We aren't called just to stand around hoping the world will be a better place, a more holy place. God has given you and me the kingdom, so that in faith and hope and love we may shed light on the kingdom that is breaking in all over the place. You never know when God will come knocking wanting to sit down with you and meet you face to face. God just might meet you when you stop to listen to an acquaintance's story in Target, or when you stop to help a stranger, or you forgive a loved one for a wrong they have done, or you provide hospitality for someone who seems alone – even if it's just with a smile or a pat on the back. God may just meet you when you give a hug and an afternoon to a friend who has recently lost their parent or spouse. But, you will never know whether God is knocking if you are too afraid to open the door.

So do not be afraid. It's God's joy to give God's people the entire kingdom of heaven, here and now. We don't work in order to achieve it; we don't work in order to deserve it. It's just that it

makes God happy to give YOU his kingdom! So don't just stand there, letting it unknowingly pass you by. Be alert and dressed for action. God is on the move and has made room for you to be a part of this kingdom, right now. Amen.