**Gospel: Luke 12:32-40 Glory to You, O Lord** [Jesus said:] 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.

35“Be dressed for action and have your lamps lit; 36be like those who are waiting for their master to return from the wedding banquet, so that they may open the door for him as soon as he comes and knocks. 37Blessed are those slaves whom the master finds alert when he comes; truly I tell you, he will fasten his belt and have them sit down to eat, and he will come and serve them. 38If he comes during the middle of the night, or near dawn, and finds them so, blessed are those slaves.

39“But know 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. 40You also must be ready, for the Son of Man is coming at an unexpected hour.”

The Gospel of the Lord **Praise to you, O Christ**

*God of grace and gentle mercy, you want nothing more than to give us the peace and joy of life in your kingdom, but we hold onto what we think we need, to have that joy and peace; our money, our stuff, our false sense of security. Help us to release our hold on that which does not serve us or our neighbor and to take hold of you and the promises you give that never disappoint. May the words of our mouths and the meditations of our hearts, be acceptable in your sight, O Lord, our strength and our Redeemer*.

“Do not be afraid, little flock, for it is your Father’s good pleasure to give you the kingdom.” These words from Luke’s Gospel are meant to give us peace and relief from the constant need to store away our treasures for tomorrow at the expense of our serenity and our neighbor.

This Gospel passage has three stories woven together to remind us that God provides for our needs and wants us to trust that we have what we need because God loves us; every single one of us.

We do not need to worry about having too much or not enough - God just asks us to be faithful with what we do have.

Finally, God asks us to be prepared for whenever Christ returns - we don’t know when that is, and we won’t know until it happens. If we are about what God has called us to do, we have nothing to fear when Christ shows up. (The Rev. Dr. Delmer Chilton said that when Christ returns, his Momma will say, “Hi there, you made it - want a biscuit?”)

God is many things and unexpected is one of them. That means we cannot control God. We cannot put God in a box and take God out when we are ready. God does what God wants and we follow along - if we’re smart.

I don’t know about you, but I got in line at the Quik Trip last Friday and got 5 quick picks for the Mega Millions that had topped out at over 1 billion dollars. What in blazes was I going to do with a take home of over 600 million dollars? I can’t even fathom that much money. I had my ideas - I could give 100 million to the Synod to provide whatever any of our congregations needed. I could give money to every homeless shelter in Georgia to get food to feed hungry people - I could do all kinds of things. What I can’t do with that much money is be at peace. I would always be worrying about someone trying to take it or kill me for it or any million things I could worry about. Where your treasure is, there your heart is also. Thank goodness I didn’t have the winning ticket. My heart couldn’t take the pressure.

Ministry is done, day in and day out, by people of simple means who faithfully give from what they have, to help those who have need. Because of the generosity of many churches in this Region and this Synod, yours included, we can give grants to any church that asks for one for outreach projects. We have been able to offer debt relief to Rostered leaders who have crushing College and Seminary debt. We have been able to give Covid grants to congregations who experienced financial hardship because members left or could not give.

There are lots of church and community food pantries in this country that have plenty of food to share with hungry people because of the generosity of good people **without** millions of dollars. There are community gardens tended by teenagers that provide fresh produce for hungry families that must rely on food pantries that don’t usually have fresh produce. All of this happens because people give of what they have, even if it is not much, to benefit those who don’t have. Most of these givers are giving from modest bank accounts and overflowing hearts.

If we wait around until Christ returns to do anything, we will be caught unawares and unprepared. We won’t have accomplished anything because we let fear rule the day. That is no way to live my friends. My Momma and Delmer’s Momma always said, “If you are about the Lord’s business every day and doing what you know you are supposed to do - you have nothing to fear. Just keep doing it.!”

So, what has God told us to do? We are to Love God and Love our neighbor. When we love God, our love of neighbor naturally flows from that. It is what we are capable of because of the work of the Holy Spirit in our lives - given to us because God loves us. God has told us that we have enough; enough for ourselves and our families, and enough to share - to give away to others. Just like manna in the wilderness, we don’t benefit anyone if we collect more and more stuff - and stuff it in barns or closets or storage units. What we don’t need, we give away.

What is the takeaway for us today? What is God calling us to do? I think God is calling us to push past our fears of not enough; not enough people, youth, time, money and resources or stamina. God is telling us we have enough - start there.

How often is your church building used during the week? Who could benefit from a place to meet? Girl Scouts and Boy Scouts? AA, Al-Anon, a church start up? Do you have room for a Food Pantry, a clothes closet, community meeting space, another church with no place to worship? If you have a building that, like most churches, isn’t used to its full potential, you can offer the gift of space to the community for a reasonable cost. Yes, it may be needing repairs, it may not be what it used to be but it provides shelter. The more people you share it with, the more people available to help with upkeep.

How much land do you have that is not being used? Can you mark off a plot and turn it over, add some compost and prepare it to plant first thing next spring? When spring comes, invite your neighbors to take a part of it and plant it with the understanding that when the food grows, some is eaten by each family that planted it and some is given away to others who need it.

You can sit around and worry about not having enough or you can take inventory of what you do have and figure out how to make it work to serve the community around you. Much has been done with faithful people who trust that God will provide than with fearful people who are worried about running out.

It is hard to be brave and optimistic in the world today. We are still being affected by Covid and will be for years. We live in a violent world where people shoot first and ask questions later. We are afraid of what will happen if the candidate from the other side of the aisle gets elected. Things happen that unmoor us and make us uneasy, but Jesus said: Do not be afraid, little flock, for it is your Father’s good pleasure to give you the kingdom.”

We have a choice! We can live in that fear and be miserable or we can look around us at all the faithful people who just keep reaching out every day with what they have. There is so much beauty and generosity and grace in the world around us, but we have to turn off the news, get off Facebook, stop comparing ourselves with others who appear to have more, walk outside our door and look around. God has given us enough! Every last one of you is enough! Trust that – Be aware, be ready, be generous!

We are called to live in faith that God is in control of this world despite evidence to the contrary. As St. Teresa of Avila has said,

Christ has no body but yours,

No hands, no feet on earth but yours,

Yours are the eyes with which he looks

Compassion on this world,

Yours are the feet with which he walks to do good,

Yours are the hands, with which he blesses all the world.

Yours are the hands, yours are the feet,

Yours are the eyes, you are his body.

Christ has no body now but yours.

How will you live your lives in faithful understanding of God’s kingdom already here and still to come?

We give, we serve, we love with what God has already given us. We trust that God is guiding us on this journey of life, and we can trust that God will continue and it will be enough! Why? Because God loves us to distraction and has more faith in us than we do in ourselves. Because it is your Father’s good pleasure to give you the Kingdom! Amen and Amen