

Sermon for Thirteenth Sunday after Pentecost Rally Sunday

Date: September 8, 2019

Location: St. John's Lutheran Church, Austin, MN

Old Testament: Genesis 15:1–6

Epistle Reading: Hebrews 11:1–16

Gospel Reading: Luke 12:22–40

Sermon Text: Luke 12:22–40

Sermon Title: Be Ready



Introit: Psalm 119:28–32; Antiphon: Psalm 119:27

Hymns:

LSB 861 – Christ Be My Leader

LSB 588 – Jesus Loves Me

LSB 867 – Let Children Hear the Mighty Deeds

Liturgy:

Divine Service: Special (*With excerpts from Divine Service 4*)



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Text: Luke 12:22–40

Then Jesus said to his disciples, “So I tell you to stop worrying about what you will eat or wear. Life is more than food, and the body is more than clothes. Consider the crows. They don’t plant or harvest. They don’t even have a storeroom or a barn. Yet, God feeds them. You are worth much more than birds.

“Can any of you add an hour to your life by worrying? If you can’t do a small thing like that, why worry about other things? Consider how the flowers grow. They never work or spin yarn for clothes. But I say that not even Solomon in all his majesty was dressed like one of these flowers. That’s the way God clothes the grass in the field. Today it’s alive, and tomorrow it’s thrown into an incinerator. So how much more will he clothe you people who have so little faith?

“Don’t concern yourself about what you will eat or drink, and quit worrying about these things. Everyone in the world is concerned about these things, but your Father knows you need them. Rather, be concerned about his kingdom. Then these things will be provided for you. Don’t be afraid, little flock. Your Father is pleased to give you the kingdom.

“Sell your material possessions, and give the money to the poor. Make yourselves wallets that don’t wear out! Make a treasure for yourselves in heaven that never loses its value! In heaven thieves and moths can’t get close enough to destroy your treasure. Your heart will be where your treasure is.

“Be ready for action, and have your lamps burning. Be like servants waiting to open the door at their master’s knock when he returns from a wedding. Blessed are those servants whom the master finds awake when he comes. I can guarantee this truth: He will change his clothes, make them sit down at the table, and serve them. They will be blessed if he comes in the middle of the night or toward morning and finds them awake.

“Of course, you realize that if the homeowner had known at what hour the thief was coming, he would not have let him break into his house. Be ready, because the Son of Man will return when you least expect him.”

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Grace to you, and peace, in Jesus' name. Amen.

Well, as is our practice, and the practice of the faithful in worship for thousands of years, we had some readings from Holy Scripture. The first, from Genesis, was actually the fourth time that God had spoken to Abraham and promised that he would be the father of many nations. You know that ultimately Isaac was born to Abraham and Sarah and through him, and the generations that followed, a great nation was in fact born. A nation through whom the Messiah came. A nation that now encompasses all of the faithful, including you as adopted children of the Sovereign Lord.

The Second reading came from the book of Hebrews. A book written to the Hebrew, or Jewish people. That great nation descended from Abraham. It is specifically written to those who had come to believe that Jesus is the Holy Messiah of God, brought to the world by God the Father, through their own people.

Chapter eleven of that book is often referred to as the "great faith chapter." It is a chapter that lists the faithful through the generations. It shows how the faith, the promise given first to Adam and Eve¹, was passed down through the generations. Father taught son, who taught grandson, and on down the line as they waited. They waited for the Messiah to come. The book of Hebrews shows Messiah has come and His name is Jesus.

In these two readings we see an example for all of us to follow. That example is to teach the children the one true Holy Christian faith. The faith that proclaims Jesus as the Christ of God, our Savior. There is nothing in all of creation that could ever be more important. Not, that is, if you want to see your children with you in Heaven. There is nothing in all of creation that could ever be more important.

The Reverend Doctor Daniel Preus, a man of some import in Lutheran circles, once said:

Parents, it is optional for you to teach your children chess, or sewing or how to change a tire. It is not optional, for you as parents, to teach them about Jesus. It is not the Sunday School teacher's job. It is not your pastor's job. It is yours. It is your duty, and to be able to make a good confession, you must study and learn good theology. Start by going to your pastor's Bible study. He is there to help you.²



1 Genesis 3:15

2 Rev. Daniel Preus to Iowa District East delegates, 2012

Helping you teach your children has become a major focus of what we do here at St. John's Lutheran Church. We do not want to simply "go through the motions" and then think we've accomplished something. Our goal, and yours, should be to truly make every effort to ensure that the children actually learn the truths of the Christian Faith. You, and we, should love your children enough to care about what they actually believe. We should love and care about them enough to prepare them for the future onslaught that will come for them. Because once they leave the security of your home and this church, and continue to grow up in the world, you can bet the world is going to grow in its hatred of this faith. The world is going to do everything, and anything, to tear that faith away from them, and to tear them away from you. It will do anything to keep them away from the truth we teach here. As Dr. Preus said, "It is not optional..."

Our job is not to take over for you, but to empower you to teach your children about where true salvation, and heaven, is found. That being in Jesus Christ our Lord alone. This year we are implementing a new Sunday School program and making some changes to the CASE³ and Confirmation programs. We are doing this better empower your children in the one true faith.

By the end of their instruction in Confirmation, at about age twelve or thirteen, they will know well the basic foundational teachings of the Bible, and that I as their pastor, am always someone they can talk to; someone they can go to about anything. That's why we're here. However, through all of that work, effort and time, we still cannot take the place of loving parents who truly care about their child's salvation. Nor should we.



There is a commandment which reads:

Honor your father and your mother.⁴

In Luther's Large Catechism, he wrote that, concerning parents only God is higher in authority over children.⁵ Which sounds good. Right? You have ultimate authority over your children. They are required by God to obey you, and that's what we teach them here at church. That's great! Right?

Well yes, but with great authority comes great responsibility. Those children are yours, placed into your care by God our heavenly Father, who has adopted them, and calls them by name. He knows them. He knows every hair on their little heads. You have been given a great responsibility. A serious responsibility. Listen to what Jesus said:

3 C.A.S.E. – Christian After School Education
4 Exodus 20:12
5 Luther's Large Catechism – Fourth Commandment [105]

These little ones believe in me. It would be better for the person who causes one of them to lose their faith to be drowned in the sea with a large stone hung around his neck. How horrible it will be for the world because it causes people to lose their faith. Situations that cause people to lose their faith will come, but how horrible it will be for the person who causes one of these little ones to lose their faith!⁶



God says if you put your children's salvation at risk you place your own salvation at risk. That, if you take it seriously, as you should, can become a heavy burden. Especially for those who have done their best to be faithful to God's command and still watch their children wander from that saving faith. They wander because things outside these walls attack their faith, and sadly because sometimes things inside these walls attack their faith.

I know how much it troubles me to watch some of these kids wander from the faith, and for most of them I'm only their pastor. You are their parents. For those that wander we pray and encourage. You, me, and this congregation, we pray. We pray that by God's good grace the Holy Spirit's call will be heard, their hearts will be softened, and the sliver of faith that swells there will grow into a great tree of truth, deeply rooted in God's Sacred and Holy Word.

Here we have put a great priority on helping you with that. It is a laborious job, but a labor of love, and this congregation has richly supported that work done in God's name, and under God's command. Which is good, because you don't need to be a trained theologian to see how messed up the world is becoming around us; how bizarre the laws of our nation are becoming. In fact some of those laws are becoming more and more hostile toward the Christian Church, and the Truth that we teach here. The only Truth that saves eternally.

Summer is ending, and school is starting. As that happens you as parents have choices. You have choices about where and what your children will be taught. Listen to Jesus' Words in the Gospel reading. He says don't make success and stuff, the goal. Don't make this world your first priority. Remember that there is another life that we will live. An eternal life. Here we are only pilgrims, sojourners, foreigners in a foreign land. We are immigrants and refugees just traveling through. So Jesus says don't fret about stuff here as much as you fret about stuff there, in

6 Matthew 18:6-7 [Paraphrase]

Heaven. Teach your children how to get there. Show them the Narrow Way.⁷ Because the truth is, Jesus will come again.⁸

God's chosen people, the Children of Israel, did not expect Jesus when He showed up in Bethlehem one day. They were waiting for Him, but when He came they were not ready. For that reason many, who saw Him with their own eyes, missed Him though He walked this earth for over 30 years.

We have so much more than they did. They did not have the Scriptures available to them like we do. They did not have the clarity of hindsight, taught to us in the New Testament, like we do. We have so many advantages over them, to see Jesus for who He really is.⁹ Of course that means we have been given greater authority. Authority to teach, and with great authority comes great responsibility.

The question is will we be ready? Will our children be ready? Will their children after them be ready? When He returns will we expect Him? The question was asked in the Bible:

“When the Son of Man returns, will He find faith on the earth?¹⁰”

You know it was actually Jesus who asked that last question. He also gave the answer.

“If God does not reduce the number of those days, no one would be saved, but those days will be reduced because of those whom God has chosen.¹¹”

My charge to you is the same one Saint Paul gave to Timothy:

I solemnly call on you, in the presence of God and Christ Jesus, who is going to judge those who are living and those who are dead. I do this because Christ Jesus will come again.

Be ready to spread the Word whether or not the time is right. Point out errors, warn people, and encourage them. Be very patient when you teach.

A time will come when people will not listen to accurate teachings. Instead, they will follow their



7 Matthew 7:13-14

8 John 14:1-3

9 Acts 2:16-21

10 Luke 18:8

11 Matthew 24:22

own desires and surround themselves with teachers who tell them what they want to hear.

People will refuse to listen to the Truth and turn to myths, but you must keep a clear head in everything.¹²

As you raise and teach your children, may God forgive where you have come up short, grant you that clarity of mind that helps you do what is best for your child's salvation, help you do what is best for their eternal life, and encourage you to make that life the first priority. So that in all things, with our help, you would guide your children in the way of faith that leads to eternal life.

We pray for that always in Jesus' name.

Amen.