



Morrison Zion Evangelical Lutheran Church

www.mzluth.org

August 19, 2007

12th Sunday after Pentecost

Luke 12:32-40

Pastor Randy Ott

First Lesson: Genesis 15:1-6

Psalm of the Day: Psalm 33

Second Lesson: Hebrews 11:1-3, 8-16

Gospel: Luke 12:32-40

Have No Fear, Little Flock

What puts a little fear into the pit of your stomach? Having to get up in front of people and talk? Do you have dreams at night where you wake yourself because you are put in front of someone and you look down and notice you don't have pants on? Does that put fear in the pit of your stomach? Maybe the dark, maybe spiders, maybe snakes? I grew up with a brother that had an abnormal fear of snakes. He still does to this day, and his friends still take advantage of it.

I also found out recently about some more people, beyond the ones that I already knew, that have a healthy fear of bats. I talked to my Mom the other night on the phone and asked her how she was doing. She said, "I've had better days." I said, "Well, what is going on?" She said, "I didn't sleep at all last night. I went to bed about midnight and heard a noise in the house and couldn't figure out what it was. I slept until 1:00 a.m. when it woke me up again. I couldn't figure out what it was. It woke me up again at 3:00 a.m. and I read until 5:00 a.m. I finally got up and looked around some more and there was a bat flying around in the house with me." I found out my Mom doesn't like bats.

That bat got trapped in a little bedroom. She shut the door of the little bedroom in the house and took duct tape and put it around the seams of the door so the bat wouldn't get out.

There are things that scare us just flat out, right? There are some times that we can find help for that fear though, right? But it is kind of a helpless feeling when you are talking to your Mom on the phone and she is eight hours away and you can't do anything to go help her find a bat. No matter how much you might want to.

Our Lord knows that there are going to be things that make us afraid, things that put a fear into the pit of our stomach. He knows that a lot of them are going to have to do with the things of this world because, of course, he has taken care of the most important things, the things that deal with our greatest need—he has taken away all of our sins through his life and death. But he knows, because of the weaknesses that we have because we are sinners, there are going to be a lot of things that make us afraid.

I don't know if any of you kids here watched High School Musical II the other night, or maybe every night since it has come on. The guy that was running the restaurant in the resort and all that stuff—do you remember him? He kept doing what Sharpay wanted him to do even though he didn't like what he was doing. Do you remember what he

said, why he did it? “Because sometimes you have a mortgage to pay, you have mouths to feed and you have empty pockets and you have to do things you don’t like to do because you need a paycheck” right? Do you remember that part? That’s what he said, believe me. I watched it.

Sometimes there are things that we fear and deal with and they have to do with money and things like that. Our God recognizes that and Jesus, in Luke 12, was addressing some of those issues. He said “Don’t worry about those kinds of things. I know what you need. I am going to see to it that you have what you need.” He knows how weak we are, so he has to say it again and again with some different ways of pointing it out by pointing us to the things that take away our fear. So he says to us, “Have no fear, little flock, because your Father has been pleased to give you the kingdom.” So focus on what your greatest treasure really is. It isn’t in your bank account. It isn’t jingling in your pockets. It isn’t in a safe deposit box. Know what your greatest treasure is and then live daily in that treasure so that you are ready when Jesus comes back, no matter when it might be.

Know where your greatest treasure is. If I asked everyone here since we are in church this morning and we just read that text from Luke, “What is the greatest treasure you have?” You would all say “faith in Christ” right? We would all say that if we had been paying any kind of attention at all this morning because we are in church. We are dressed up. We are sitting around people who are also dressed up. We are singing hymns. So now we think about how it is our greatest treasure. But in your daily life, when you are facing things that put a knot in the pit of your stomach, the health of loved ones, the balance in your checkbook, how you are going to meet the mortgage, what the price of milk is going to be or what it is not going to be, what position you would like to have that you don’t have, the problems you are having at work—do you ever think to yourself once as you are facing all of those problems, “If I was just closer to God, I would get through this better.”

When the rubber hits the road in our daily lives, fear creeps in because even though we have head knowledge of the truth that the greatest thing we have is forgiveness through nothing of ourselves but all through God, we forget that is our greatest treasure and we get worried about a lot of stuff. So Jesus says, “When you are in the middle of that worry, just take a break, take a breath, pause, and think about it. Focus on what is going to last.” Because no matter what we have in this world, it is eventually going to be gone, but the thing that lasts forever and the thing that makes our loved ones last forever is the gospel of Jesus Christ—the knowledge of who he is and how he took away our sins in spite of the fact that we had nothing to offer. We had nothing in us that was loveable. He still did it for us. And then, even after we fail him—we sang about his unending love today—his love doesn’t fail us after we have failed him. He doesn’t just say to us, “I am giving you one shot. Now make the most of it and if you don’t listen to me and if you keep wandering after your own sinful nature, you are on your own.” No, his love for us is unending. That is the truth that we work so hard to teach to our children, to ourselves and to each other. That is the greatest treasure we have. That is why this building was built. That is why our school was built. And that is why we added on to the school because we want to seize every opportunity that the Good Lord puts in front of us to tell people “This is the greatest treasure.”

The greatest treasure isn't the money that puts up an addition. The greatest treasure isn't the money that pays for these lights. The greatest treasure is Christ's life and death in our place. The greatest treasure is God's unfailing love that forgives us even when we fail him time after time, even when we think "If only I had more money things would be better" and we push God completely off to the side and out of the picture. God still forgives us. He still loves us.

One of the ways he helps us to know that is he puts us around our fellow Christians who point us to the purses that don't wear out, to point us to the treasure that doesn't get destroyed by moths or taken by thieves—the love that God has for us in Christ. There is no greater feeling in the world than to know that no matter what goes wrong in this lifetime, no matter what we lose, no matter what we face, we will never face it alone because we have a God at our side who loved us enough to die for us. That is why we work in his kingdom. That is why we do what he wants us to do. That is why we teach his truth to the next generation. That is why we teach his truth to ourselves so that we have the treasure to share with other people.

We do it because he also reminds us today that you know what? That treasure is not a one-time thing. You need to be ready at all times because you don't know when Christ is coming back. The Last Day could come at any time or he could call us out of this world at any time, unexpectedly. So he says to us, "Don't be afraid. Know where your treasure is, but also be watchful at all times. Also at all times keep it in the forefront of your mind." This is my treasure and this is what makes me ready to meet my God—what he has done for me.

You notice how he describes it. He talks about being dressed and ready for service. Be ready to serve him always. Seize the opportunities to serve him, but he uses a couple of pictures to show us how and why it is so important. One of these pictures to me is just fascinating if you have stopped and thought about what we read from Luke 12. He said it is kind of like servants who are waiting for their master to return from a wedding banquet. Maybe he has gone off and gotten married and he is going to bring his bride home and it might be at the second or third watch of the night. The second watch was right before midnight. The third watch was right after midnight.

Think about it. It is good for those guys to be ready even if he comes back at that time. In Jesus' day, they weren't staying up watching the third rerun of High School Musical that day, now were they, at midnight. They were having a little lamp burning that had a little circle of light right around where they were and that is that. But be watchful and ready if he comes back whenever it is he might come back. A little bit harder right?

Then he says it will be good for those servants who open the doors, throw them open as soon as the master is there and is about to knock on it, that the doors come open. You would expect to hear a "well done good and faithful servant" next in this little parable that Jesus tells, wouldn't you? But did you notice what Jesus said is going to happen next?—the completely unexpected. He says "for those servants whose master finds them ready, the servant will dress himself to serve"—he is going to put on an apron or something—"and he'll have the servants recline at the table and he will come and wait

on them.” Now, would you expect that? Has your boss ever done that for you? Has your God ever done that for you?

You bet he has! He did it for you, maybe at this same font, just like he did it for Elizabeth this morning. He served Elizabeth. He brought her to faith through water and the Word and this incredible thing that looks so insignificant. He worked the gift of faith in another person’s heart.

Every time you come and you kneel at this altar, or if you stay standing, in wine and wafer, your Savior serves you. He says, “I love you. I have taken away your sins. Here is what I am doing for you. Now remain in my love. Be ready and be watchful at all times.”

Did you notice in there, in that second paragraph there, it doesn’t say “be watchful and ready until you are in 8th Grade. After that you are on your own.” Do we at some times in some way, shape or form give the impression that Christian education is just for children? When you hear the words “Christian education,” do you think primarily of kids? If you do, you have missed the point. Jesus says, “Be watchful and ready at all times, all through your life.” He says, “Grow in the grace and knowledge of our Lord and Savior Jesus Christ.” He doesn’t say to grow and keep on growing until you have put on a white gown and stood in front of the church and had some guy put a hand on your head. Keep growing all the days of your life.

That school addition that we put on is to be something that prepares us for a lifetime of Christian growth. It is to be there also to provide opportunities for all of us to grow in the grace and knowledge of our Lord and Savior Jesus Christ because Jesus has said, “You don’t know the day or the hour. You need to be ready at all times, at all ages, in all places and in all ways.”

So we work and we labor. We give of what the Lord has given us so that that treasure may be held out to ourselves and to others. And what God does for us, what he blesses you and me with, we can lay our head on the pillow each and every night and “have no fear little flock, for the Father has given you the kingdom.”

How cool is that?!