

07 August 2022: Luke 12 31-40 (Proper 14)

In today's Gospel reading Jesus brings together two teachings, aiming them at his disciples then and now. At first glance it may not seem that these two spiritual ideals would be linked together. Jesus obviously thought so. Today we are challenged to learn the connection between generosity and expectation.

The key is the very first verse we heard: *...it is your Father's good pleasure to give you the kingdom.* God is the One who gives joyfully, whose Being is most fully experienced as joyful, free giving. If we have the idea that God is a dread judge, aching for us to do wrong, ready to pounce, and if we have somehow been convinced that we are loathsome in God's eyes—we will live in fear. Or we might reject the notion of God altogether. Fear chokes spiritual growth; angry rejection breeds resentment, the cancer of the soul. Either prevents the joyous life that God longs for us.

Jesus tells us in the Gospels by word and deed, by parable and miracle—to the point of redundancy—that we are loved more than we can imagine, and we are given everything we need to be followers of Jesus. When we turn to Jesus, surrendering our lives past, present, and future, we are forgiven because God treasures us. What keeps us from turning, what holds us back from the joyful, boundless life of grace? There is nothing to fear nor resent because God treasures us.

There is an unexpected consequence of believing you are the treasure of God's heart: you can live in weakness and vulnerability. God dwells in our hearts, bringing new life and freedom. God's generosity is infinite, eternal, without boundaries. In saying this we surely don't only mean God's love lasts a very long time. We also mean God's love shatters all barriers: there is no 'place,' no circumstance, no person, no sin that God's love cannot transform. Because God's love for us and for all is without limitation, He forgives any and every sin which we surrender to him. Our sins only hinder us, never God. As St. Paul wrote in Romans 5:8, *...God proves his love for us in that while we still were sinners Christ died for us,* and from I Timothy (1:15), *the saying is sure and worthy of full acceptance, that Christ Jesus came into the world to save sinners...* It is simplicity itself: a sure sign of our faith in God's infinite love is our willingness to surrender every fault and failing to him, for God's wondrous, generous conversion, and to keep on surrendering.

We also see in the Scriptures that God's generosity must be received and given. God's love or forgiveness or generosity cannot stop with us, be bottled up in our lives. If we attempt to hoard God's grace, make it a kind of person possession, then we ourselves become barriers, trying to suppress the One who cannot be stopped. We can never come to the point when we say, "Okay God, you've topped me off on the love thing; tank's full; I'll come 'round again when I need a refill." When we truly receive God's generosity, we are compelled to expand our hearts, minds, souls, our lives that we will receive yet more of God's Blessing in our lives. *And* to truly receive God's generosity compels us to offer God's love, grace, and forgiveness to others; we will yearn to bring God's overflowing freedom to spouses, children, grandchildren, friends, neighbors, strangers; to everyone and anyone.

Now we come to the spiritual truth which Jesus links to generosity, and that is expectation. Jesus says: *Be dressed for action and have your lamps lit...open the door for (the master) as soon as he comes and knocks...you must be ready.* Do you expect great things from God in your life and in the lives of those around you? Do you expect great things from God at and through Calvary Church? Jesus invites us to look to God with active expectation, longing anticipation of God's joyful, irrepressible generosity. It looks a lot like children yearning for Christmas. It is the breathless anticipation of God's next blessing that will surely come; it is just fingertips away, and we must be part of it. Like Abram, in our 1st reading, it is longing for what will be, even when current circumstances may seem otherwise. We take God at God's word, assured that what God promises God will give.

Be ready for God's generosity to you and through you to others. *Do not be afraid, little flock, for it is your Father's good pleasure to give you the kingdom.* Blessing and honor, thanksgiving and praise, more than we can offer, more than we can conceive, be yours, Father, Son, and Holy Spirit, by all angels, all mortals, all creatures, now and for ever. Amen.