

August 11 2013

Scripture Lessons ~ Genesis 15:1-6  
Luke 12:32-40

**Sermon** *Awake, Alert, and Oriented*

Awake, Alert and Oriented

Shane and Andrew's Mom started Nursing School close to the end of the time when I was in college at Whitworth. And sometimes when we studied together she would use me as a kind of practice dummy for the procedures that she was studying in nursing classes. One time I had to be a stroke patient so she could practice moving me around and getting me out of bed for my rehab time. Another time she practiced by taking my blood pressure, my pulse and my heart rate. I did draw the line though when she wanted to practice giving me shots. So I made sure she had an ample supply of oranges and grapefruit and sent her on her way for that one. But then there was that time when I played a dementia patient, which wasn't a real stretch for me, where I remembered the phrase- awake, alert and oriented. The fact that it was important in communicating with confused patients to be certain they were fully awake, as alert as possible, and as oriented as they were able to person, place, and time and situation.

As you can see there are similar images in Luke's Gospel chapter 12 about our need as his followers, to be awake, alert and oriented. To be ready, as I spoke with the children, to be ready, that is for the coming of the kingdom of God so we won't be taken by surprise when that kingdom comes.

The terminology of the Kingdom of God or the realm of God and the like, has at least, I think has a twofold meaning. On the one hand, Jesus emphasizes in the Gospel in one sense God's kingdom is already here in our midst as we follow Jesus day by day. As the Holy Spirit, God in action is present with us on our daily journey of faith with God. But what about that other manifestation of the kingdom of which Jesus speaks in Luke, Chapter 12. That is the Kingdom or the Realm of God which is yet to come. What is that aspect of the kingdom all about? Why in the world does Jesus make so much in the Gospel, about being ready for that kingdom coming? The first thing that we notice in looking at this passage, I think, is this in the comforting and loving way that Jesus speaks of that coming kingdom. "Do not be afraid little flock for it is the Father's good pleasure to give you that kingdom". There are no threats. There is no dire warning. There are no frightening images but instead we are told not to fear. Accompanying by the comforting and intimate words like "little flock" and "Father" and then there is that promise

“God’s good pleasure to give you the kingdom; not make you earn the kingdom; not make you pay for the kingdom but to give it freely to you. So in the light of Jesus’ word how he wants us to prepare ourselves for the coming for that part of the kingdom.

First of all Jesus speaks about traveling light in this passage and investing our lives in things that are worthwhile and lasting. Not too many material possessions cluttering up our lives and weighing us down. And not just material things but also those spiritual and emotional bags that we carry with us from past mistakes, past hurts, past difficulties that kind of clutter up our lives and weight us down. And in addition to lightening our lives, Jesus also encourages us to bank. To bank on quality things, lasting things, things that God would have us spend our too limited time, talent and treasures. That is what is meant by those lasting purses that Jesus speaks about in the Gospel passage; purses that won’t wear out. They contain treasures that are of ultimate value, things like love, forgiveness, mercy, and hope, and joy, and the ability to help others; treasures that we are to carry with us; treasures that are worthy of our hearts’ true affection. So once the load is lightened and the focus of life is secure, Jesus says then there is preparation to be made, as we spoke again with the children about. To start off, we are to dress ourselves for action. In other words as we cloth ourselves with garments appropriate for the work we do day by day and the activities that we peruse everyday of our lives. So we are to prepare ourselves spiritually for whatever might come in the way of our life be it joyful times or difficult times like illness or financial downturns or unemployment or family discord or even ultimately our own death. We should not have to reinvent the wheel each time we face adversity in life. The garments of faith should help to see us through.

Then we are to light our lamp, Jesus said. That is we are to ready the tools of faith which will help us to be prepared for any contingency we might face. Tools like prayer, quiet meditation, the ability to worship joyfully, and earnestly, the knowledge of God’s never ending love for us, which is propounded time and time again in the scriptures and finally our support system of friends, of family, and church family will be there for us no matter what happens through thick or thin.

We have forgotten to consider one really important thing, what is this kingdom which is to come. What we making ready to meet ultimately? First I think, God’s coming kingdom has to do everything with the end of this earthly life and our transition to the life that is come. Though Jesus’ words are pastoral and though they are comforting to us in today’s passage there is a sense of urgency here. The sense the time is short; that time is valuable; and there is opportunity to preparation but then there is that transition to a new kind of reality.

Secondly though, beyond our death and new quality of that next life to which we go. The kind of apocalyptic language here, that ten dollar preacher word,

I am throwing out for you. Apocalyptic language that points to some sort of a second coming and the coming together of all things for some just and loving purpose perhaps at the end of time. There are references and there are images and there are symbols throughout Scripture that gives us a kind of hint of things to come. But as Jesus points out these things are to take place at unexpected hour. So we really won't know when all of things come to pass. One thing we can be sure of though, if we believe in the loving caring God of Jesus of Nazareth we know that the future is ultimately in God's hand and all things will come to together for some just and good purpose that only God knows for sure in the end. So we are left to get ready which when all is said and done is more complicated than living the best life of faith that we can possibility live day by day. Be dressed then for action and have your lamp lit said Jesus. Be like those who are waiting for their master to return from the wedding banquet so they may open the door for him as soon as he comes and knocks. Get your act together folks. Amen