

November 17 2013

Scripture Lessons ~ Isaiah 12

Luke 21:1-8

Sermon *Do Not Go After Them*

I hope you remember Aesop old fable of “The Tortoise and the Hare.” It is actually one of my favorite Bugs Bunny cartoons, too, by the way. As you know the Tortoise and the Hare were going to race one another and conventional wisdom of course would tell us that there was no question as who was going to win the race. The much faster and much quicker Hare over the slow cumbersome gait of the poor old Tortoise. But strangely what happened in the fable? The Hare and his pride and in his arrogance and his over confidence fooled around during the race, mocks the Tortoise, and even takes a rest and assumes he will have no trouble catching up. But the Tortoise sticks to his pace and by the time the Hare comes to his senses and catches up. What happens? The Tortoise wins. And the moral of the Aesop fable is this; slow and steady wins the race. Slow and steady wins the race.

You know many of us as we face life trials and even our own day by day journey of faith kind of envy and even try to emulate; try to copy the attitude of the Hare in this fable. Down in our heart of hearts, we don't really want to stick diligently to the pathways necessary to reach the goals in life. We don't want to deal with all the obstacles we are going to encounter in life. We are not particularly thrilled either with maintaining the disciplines necessary to continue with a healthy relationship with our family, and with our friends and even with our God. Instead we get a little bit cocky we think these things don't really apply to us so we try to take some short cuts in life. Short cuts that seem at first to get us ahead in of the pack in the game of life; but like the hare in reality will lead us sometimes to blind alleys and dead ends and even at the last not to reach the end the race with our faith in God intact but instead sometimes leads us to great disappointments in life indeed. Not that life in general or our journey of faith in life particular should be a sort of monotonous drudgery as we shuffle our way through life like the tortoise with no excitement or color or laughter. On the contrary, life should be filled with all these joyful and wonderful things. But at some point we are called upon God to kind of choose a pathway in life. A pathway marked sometimes by perseverance and dedication and the moral fiber necessary to reach our goal and to become the loving, caring, joyful people. People who have a heart for others, the people who have a heart for the world that Jesus call each one of us to be. Other words, we have to be content enough with who we are and what we were put on this earth to do, to run life race and to show a steady pace like the Tortoise in the story. And not

be lead here on dangerous and fruitless tangents that can threaten underline our faith in God and sometimes undermine the teachings of Jesus as well. In the light of these things I don't think then that it is accident that Luke links together the story of this widow that we spoke to the children about and her mite with Jesus words about the coming together of all things in the last days because in these two sets of teachings, Jesus kind of supposes and holds up together for our consideration two different approaches to faith. One I would call is the Tortoise approach to faith vs the Hare approach to faith.

First of all we are given an example of the poor widow who simply and quietly puts in her sacrificial amount in the temple treasury as opposed to the wealthy who put in their noisy coins which might even be a pittance of their wealth compared to the widow. One more little story that Mike would have pleased for me to say is the stewardship moral let us we are called to return materially to God's work humbly, generously, sacrificially or at least appropriately the way God has given to us. There is another approach that the widow gives us and it goes like this she, I think, represents the slow and steady nature of the tortoise. She is so grateful to God for what God has given to her however small. She out of love can't resist in returning her love to God in a tangible way nor can she resist being content and thankful to God for who she is and what she has been given in life and so she perseveres. She walks her journey of faith with diligence and joy and doing what she can to share her love of God with others all around her.

But another approach to faith can be seen in the words of Jesus regarding at the end of all things. I would like think it is like the way of the Hare almost a short cut in the journey of faith in contrast to the steady perseverance faith of the widow in the story; the crowd begins to be morbidly curious about what these last days will all be about; "When will they be?" They ask. "What will be the signs to look for that they are coming?" You and I both know that there lots of people lots of TV preachers and whole churches that focus intently as the last days approach to faith. I think because secretly it is kind of flashy, and it is exciting and it looks more interestingly of that slow steady pace of faith like the Tortoise; like the poor widow. It is more fun for example to think of the 2012 aspect calendars and to speculate about who the Antichrist will be in Revelations going to be. Who are the good guys and; who are the bad guys? What wars and disasters that will take place before the end. And who will be ruptured and who won't. Of course I am going to be one of those who gets rapture and on and on believe me there are scads and scads of people and there are a great amount of books and movies made to depict these last days and in a sense the sucks us into the theology of the Hare because in my opinion it is a short cut. It is a diversion it is the Hare's way of winning life's race. They or we can believe we don't have to do a whole lot of

anything in life to reach those last days. It will be over real soon any way and it really doesn't matter what path we on in life; whether we are grateful and content or with what God has given to us or not for as long as we are in the right place at the right time when the end comes. That is not to say, of course we should not be concerned about what we believe about the last days or that all those who focus on the last day's theology are not sincere in their faith. God forbid that I am suggesting in some judgmental way that they somehow in some way like the hare will win the race but listen to what Jesus says in regard to all of this in today's Gospel lesson. He said to beware that you are not led astray for many are going to come in my name and say I am He. The time is here. And what does Jesus say Don't Go after Them. Don't Go After Them. At the risk of putting words in Jesus' mouth I might even tell us "Go after her". "Go after the widow" and follow your journey of faith deliberate perseverance in generous joyful way that the widow demonstrate for us in the path which she has chosen with God. Be thankful. Be content. Risk in life. Risk in life knowing it may not be the glamour thing; might not be the flamboyant thing. You may never get those 15 minutes of fame that all of us secretly want in life because it is as exciting as the Hare may seem. Jesus and even Aesop knew that the unlikely way of the tortoise would perhaps be the more faithful way in the end. Don't Go After Them. Don't go after them. But instead go After Her. Slow and steady wins the race Slow and steady wins the race.

And Together we say AMEN.