

September 24, 2017 "The Secret of Peace" Luke 12:22-31

This reading in Luke belongs to the dialogues and teaching that Jesus did on the road. The road led from Galilee to Jerusalem. He is literally about to enter the final week of his ministry on earth. In Jerusalem Jesus will be welcomed by crowds of Jewish pilgrims who have heard about his teaching and healing ministry, and want to know if HE is the Messiah promised in the Old Testament Scriptures. The exuberance of the crowds, the size of their gatherings, their numbers will cause the Sanhedrin to decide something must be done and done immediately. Jesus already knows, the cross is waiting for HIM in Jerusalem.

That is important background for this one reason. Jesus has every reason in HIS human nature to be worrying about the future. He knows his followers and even the 12, are nervous about this road trip and its dangers. One of them has said out loud well, lets go and die with HIM. However, it is on the road to the final week of HIS life Jesus teaches this lesson. "Do not worry about your life, what you will eat; or about your body, what you will wear." And we need to remember HE is not skipping along singing, "Que sera, sera, whatever will be will be." I loved the movie...The Man Who Knew Too Much...starring Jimmy Stewart. I had a crush on Doris Day who sang that song..."the future's not ours to see, que sera, sera."

Jesus attitude is not a casual surrender to fate. He turns HIS face towards Jerusalem with every intention of dying on the cross to save the souls, to save the lives, of as many who will hear HIS words, see HIS deeds, and believe in HIM and the God who has come into the world in HIM for the purpose of redeeming lives. The story of the cross is not a tragedy. Almighty God in Jesus Christ intends that the crucifixion occur. The blood of the lamb will be shed to save as many as will come to HIM.

The teaching of Jesus at this point that we should not worry is profound and mind boggling. It signals that He is calling us to a way of living which flies in the face of the cultures of the world, including our own consumer culture. "I tell you," says our Lord, "do not worry about your life, what you will eat; or about your body what you will wear." The issue is length of life. The number of our days, and years. It is about having enough to eat. It is about not going naked. Having clothing to wear. Jesus says we ought not to waste energy worrying about the basics of life and living.

We need to hear that HE is saying do not waste your energy worrying. Use your energy by working. Work hard. Work smart. And do not worry. Worrying about what the future will bring, is not productive use of time or energy. Jesus knew the clock was ticking. Time was limited. Energy (HIS own) was going to run out. He said it so many times. For this purpose, for this reason HE had come into the world, been raised, been baptized, thought, and taught, and healed people. Time and energy is to be used productively. And that is where this piece of teaching makes a powerful and dynamic turn. It is important to work for food and clothing. But it is just as important to remember you are a child in the hands and care and keeping of the living God who made heaven and earth and gave you life, and calls you to life eternal.

Don't waste time. Don't waste energy. Worrying about the future, worrying about what is going to happen or might happen, is just that. A waste of both time and energy. "Life is more than a roast beef dinner. Life is more than a designer labeled suit of clothes." Jesus says remember the ravens. To our Saviour, the ravens are a good symbolic representation of what goes on in what we would call every day life. They do not plant gardens. They do not take off a harvest in the golden days of Fall. They don't have barns or store rooms. They depend on the grace of God for everything they eat. And they do receive sustenance.

I need to underline that Jesus is not saying, sit in a rocking chair and wait for it to fall in your lap without any effort at all. Jesus is not teaching idleness. He knows how the world works. But...HE also knows God is real, and that God cares what happens to you and to your neighbor and to me. That said, the ravens live in hourly dependence on God. He knows the degree to which God cares about you and your well being. He knows what you need. He is not about to forget you or abandon you. "Who of you, by worrying, can add a single hour to his life?" I am quoting a song here... "we live once and we die once. There's no reincarnate episode. Don't waste time, effort, energy worrying about the future. Live and work in the present. And place your trust, your faith in the God who made you and saves you.

Then Jesus talks about the lilies in the field to illustrate the folly of spending bushels of energy to be dressed in the most fashionable clothing. Jesus is not talking about day lilies or Easter lilies either for that matter. He is from Galilee. These are in all probability the scarlet anemones. They grow wild and they seem to be everywhere in the fields of Galilee. They look like our poppies. When we first saw them that was our question...are those poppies? Anemones. Scarlet. Every where in fields of grass. They do not toil nor do they spin. The fact is they are beautiful. They do what they were created to do. They grow and bloom and bring a flash of colour to sparse fields. Old catechism question. What is the chief end of man? Answer. To glorify God and enjoy HIM forever. Doesn't mean we should be idle. It does mean that like Jesus we should be intentional about life. About why we are here. Giving to God the first place in our lives and our days. However many or few they may be.

"The Father knows you need food and clothing. Seek HIS kingdom and these things will be given to you." That is Jesus promise to us as HE approached Calvary. What Jesus is saying, is that if we take care of our spiritual lives, giving HIM the glory due HIS name, the body will be taken care of. God will provide. Some would dismiss this as nonsense. Jesus says it is the most important choice a man, a woman can make. Give God glory, and do it forever. Not for a day, or a year...forever.

The disciples were comparatively few in number. It is not unreasonable to say they were a numerical drop in the bucket of humanity. The fact is in pursuing the Kingdom of God they turned the world upside down. As a result of their pursuit of Jesus slavery is illegal in our nation. As a result of their pursuit of life in Christ, we have taken seriously slogans like "Make Love, Not War." We continue to call the world to recognition of the sacred nature of human life, because God made us and not we ourselves.

It is not an understatement to say, worry did not change the world. Faith did and faith in Jesus does. A group knits and sews and sends clothing to Kenya in hockey bags. What does that accomplish in the great scheme of things? The fact is that for the children who are on the receiving end, and the girls who are receive those clothes...it changes everything. I have just received my annual appeal letter from one of our Mission Homes in Toronto. It says \$4.75 will give Thanksgiving Dinner to a person in a few weeks time. To the person living on the street...it means a lot. So I send my contribution. The food will be shared in Jesus name. It will be served in a church like hall.

Things like this, we do. We do them with the intention of serving God by caring for others. Locally, we will support the food bank. And one of the reasons we do so, is because we want to glorify God and enjoy HIS presence. This is so much more important than worrying.

Let us pray;

Lord help us to be intentional about serving YOU and serving our neighbours. Help us to remember that some of the little things we do because YOUR love has touched our lives turn out to be big things in the lives of people who need us, and also need YOU. By means of YOUR Spirit help us to hear your word and to live as people who believe your word. In Jesus name we ask... Amen