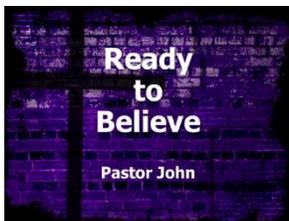


Ready to Believe

August 7, 2016

Luke 12: 32-40:

³² My little group of disciples, don't be afraid! Your Father wants to give you the kingdom. ³³ Sell what you have and give the money to the poor. Make yourselves moneybags that never wear out. Make sure your treasure is safe in heaven, where thieves cannot steal it and moths cannot destroy it. ³⁴ Your heart will always be where your treasure is. ³⁵ Be ready and keep your lamps burning ³⁶ just like those servants who wait up for their master to return from a wedding feast. As soon as he comes and knocks, they open the door for him. ³⁷ Servants are fortunate if their master finds them awake and ready when he comes! I promise you that he will get ready and have his servants sit down so he can serve them. ³⁸ Those servants are really fortunate if their master finds them ready, even though he comes late at night or early in the morning. ³⁹ You would surely not let a thief break into your home, if you knew when the thief was coming. ⁴⁰ So always be ready! You don't know when the Son of Man will come.



What are the pleasures of your heart? What are the things you treasure deep within your heart? What are the things you do that fill you with joy, with a sense of purpose, with a feeling of contentment? Do you believe that this is what God wants for your life?

If you could do anything for God, what do you think God would have you doing? If you were without fear and without any restrictions, what would God put you to work doing? It is in the intersection of the things that bring us joy and the gifts and talents we have that God wants us to live. When

we allow God to lead us to a life that dwells in this place, we find that life is full of treasures. We find serving God brings us great treasures. Are you ready to believe that this is God's desire for your life? Let us pray...

In the opening lines of today's reading, we see God's desire to be in an intimate and personal relationship with us. The passage opens with "my



little group of disciples". Another translation reads, "my little flock". One can hear the tenderness in these statements. There is the implication that Jesus so wants

to be in relationship with ALL of God's children. Just as

Jesus longed to gather his 'chicks' to himself as he entered Jerusalem that last week of his life, God wants to gather all of us to himself.

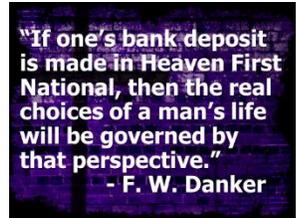


Jesus states another of God's desires: "*Your Father wants to give you the kingdom*". God wants us all to

experience the kingdom of heaven here on earth. God is constantly working to draw us in, to connect to us, to

be the daily influence in our lives. But as we talked about last week, there is a cost to us. Last week we were reminded that we cannot serve two masters. Jesus again offers similar advice: "*Sell what you have and give the money to the poor.*" Again we are reminded that our true value or worth is not tied to all that we possess, but instead is tied to our value in God's eyes. God knows it is easiest to give us this kingdom if we are not tied to the things of this earthly kingdom, so we are instructed to sell.

F. W. Danker once wrote, *"If one's bank deposit is made in Heaven First National, then the real choices of a man's life will be governed by that perspective."* Jesus is not asking us to sell ALL that we have. He is asking us to not hoard what we have been blessed with but to be willing to part with some of it to meet the needs of those who are less fortunate. It is turning our focus outward instead of inward.



Jesus invites us to *"Make sure your treasure is safe in heaven."* Instead of surrounding ourselves with fine clothes and gold and other valuables that will not last, Jesus invites us to focus on things such as generosity, justice, compassion, and mercy. When we seek these treasures, our attention is not on ourselves and the things that fade away but is instead focused on others and their needs. It is then that we honor God's call to love others. It is when we "clothe" ourselves in the things of heaven that we begin to focus on heaven. Soon we find that when our heart seeks the things of God, then this is where our treasure is as well.

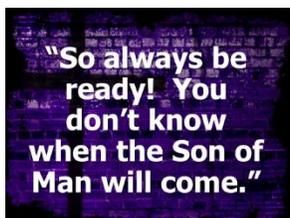
The passage from Luke goes on to encourage us to *"be ready and keep your lamps burning."* There are two time frames for this verse. The first is in the here and now.



It is how we build up our treasures in heaven. We are called to always be ready to serve God in this time and place. We are called to be Jesus' hands and feet to those in need. We are called to be attuned to God's presence and interventions in our lives. To be ready we need to be

attuned to God. To do so we need to be daily in the Word, daily in prayer, daily seeking His will for our lives. This is how we keep our lamps burning. Our lamps are that light of Jesus that is inside of us and it is that light that we share with others. When our peace and contentment rests firmly in God, we have a light about us that draws others in. They see Christ in us.

The second time frame for this verse is in the eternal. In verse 40 we read,



“So always be ready! You don’t know when the Son of Man will come.” Clearly Jesus is speaking of the day when He returns in glory to establish the new kingdom here on earth. Like the servants awaiting their master

returning from the wedding banquet, we too must be ready for when Jesus returns. If we are not ready, it will be rather unfortunate. We cannot lapse into periods or seasons where we are distant from Christ and from our faith. We cannot allow the things of this world to creep in and become our priorities.



But sometimes we do. Sometimes we lose our fire, our passion for God. We find ourselves lost, in a place where we cannot sense God in our lives. It may be due to an

unexpected event such as a death or a divorce or a job loss. It may be due to sudden busyness and a loss of focus on our faith. These are times and seasons we all go through. I invite you to turn your attention to the screens. Consider your journey of faith as you watch the video and listen to his story. [Play video.]

Can you relate to his story? Can you recall when you first came to accept Jesus as your Lord and Savior? Remember the passion and fire that you felt? There was a burning desire to share Jesus with others. Like the man in the video, you were prepared to run so that you could share Jesus with as many others as you could find.

And can you think of seasons when you walked, maybe when life's storms had you just coping, just getting by? Or maybe you just drifted. One day you realized you were not on fire and that you did not have that burning desire in your heart any more. Life became comfortable, it became about fitting in. You grew content there. Perhaps you are there now. If you are there now, are you ready to believe that God has more for you? Are you ready to believe that God desires for your life to be filled with His presence and power? Are you ready to believe and to step into the life of discipleship that God calls you to lead?

Friends, our faith does not call us to be comfortable. Our faith does not call us to be content. Our faith does not call us to fit in. Our life in Christ is not about being lukewarm or about being 'normal'. We are called to be passionate about our faith. We are called to be radical in the way we offer Christ's love to others. We are called to love others in a way that draws them into His love. Do you believe this? Are you ready to believe that Christ has come and knocks at the door of your heart? Jesus invites us to live a radical, compassionate faith out in the world so that all may come to know Jesus as Lord. Are you ready to believe you are called?