

Sermon: 12<sup>th</sup> Sunday after Pentecost – St. Thomas 20<sup>th</sup> Anniversary

Text: Luke 12:22-40 (v. 32)

Theme: Do not be afraid, little flock...

Goal: To comfort God's people with the promises of daily care and of eternal reward, while we are ready dressed serving God through our fellows.

Dear Friends,

Introduction: How much time do we spend every day working and eating? Usually we spend 8 hours in the office/factory or whenever we work, plus the driving time to our work place and back home; which adds up around 10 to 12 hours. We spend around 2 hours preparing our food and eating (breakfast, lunch and dinner, plus tea and coffee time). We spend 7 to 8 hours sleeping plus 1 hour to take a shower and to get dressed. There is only 1 hour left for leisure, devotional time, TV... This is the case in a normal situation. ..

How can Jesus tell us "Don't worry about your life, what you will eat... what you will dress..."? if all our life is running after food, housing, clothes, security?

Jesus knows that this is the daily routine, the daily rhythm of every normal person. God Himself instituted work as a task for humankind to get the daily bread. We have to work and to get our daily bread with the labour of our hands. Housing, food and security are among the basic needs of everyone. There is nothing wrong in doing so. But Jesus wants to lift our eyes to a higher level and to a better standard of life. Food, clothes, position, riches don't play any role anymore at the death bed. Only one thing is necessary and will give us hope and comfort at the end of our lives: faith in Jesus and hope in the kingdom He promises to all who believe in Him. This point of view

makes a huge difference in our Christian lives and how we face the daily challenges.

As we are celebrating St. Thomas 20<sup>th</sup> Anniversary, we know how many concerns were raised from the very beginning and how many concerns are still raised about our organization, our facilities, our own sustainability and the Five Years independence plan, challenges and struggles... and we are still a small church, not a big congregation. They are all valid concerns as an organized church. But we can never forget the main goal of our church and of every faithful Christian church: to help people to “be dressed ready” (as our text expresses it) for the encounter with Jesus! Jesus Himself comforts us with His assurance and love and says: “Do not be afraid, little flock, for your Father has been pleased to give you the Kingdom.”

I – “Don’t be afraid, little flock”: I give you the daily bread.

“Don’t be afraid, little flock”: I give you the daily bread. How good it is to hear these words of comfort and quietness in the midst of our needs. The same God, who takes care of the birds and of the flowers, providing food and clothes for them, takes care of His children as well. “And how much more valuable you are than birds” and flowers! “Life is more important than food and the body more than clothes.” Jesus taught us to pray in the Lord’s Prayer: “Give us this day our daily bread.” I like to note that we ask “this day” for “the daily bread”; if we asked for the ‘*monthly*’ bread, and God gave us all the bread we need for a month on the same day, the bread would become stale and hard... God is wise and He taught us to pray every day for the daily needs.

Have you ever missed the daily bread? Maybe sometimes we didn’t get the kind of bread we had wished for. But we are surviving and we are here alive. God’s promise is real and true!

I have just come back from Mozambique. I don't know how the ordinary poor people of the villages I visited survive. But they do survive! Most of the people are unemployed, even the TEE students. They try to plant something in the dry land around their huts. A feeding program managed by the church helps them to get some food. But since the Lutheran Church began to work there 7 years ago much has changed to good! The children have a school and receive a plate of food every day, medical centres are helping people in their health issues, even caring for the HIV/AIDS infected... The church is now working in partnership with the government. And God's promise becomes true in those villages as well. "Don't be afraid, little flock": I give you the daily bread..."

II – "Don't be afraid, little flock": I have a table prepared for you.

Jesus wants to give us a better hope than only surviving the daily battle for bread and life. He says: "Don't be afraid, little flock": I have a table prepared for you. When Jesus talks in our text about the servants and the master, and says that the master will invite the faithful servants to "recline at the table and will come and wait on them", He is talking about Himself and about us. He, the Master, has a table prepared for us in heaven, the table of salvation. He gives us a foretaste of this celestial table when He invites us to come to His Holy Table at the Lord's Supper, where He serves His Holy Body and Blood for the forgiveness of our sins. The fellowship with God and the celestial blessings are shared by Jesus with His faithful servants every time we come together to worship Him in this house.

For 20 years St. Thomas has been an agency of God's love and blessings. It's a big privilege to have an established congregation, a place to worship, a pastor and regular services. Some are not aware of this blessing and don't use this privilege in a proper way.

Mozambique doesn't have an ordained pastor. The only one they had, the founder of the mission, had to go back to Canada for cancer treatment. This means that they have Holy Communion and baptism only when ordained pastors visit them. I had the privilege to baptize 65 adults and 117 children, 182 in total, and to offer them the Lord's Supper.

III - "Don't be afraid, little flock": Share what I give you.

While we wait for Jesus to return, we are warned to "be dressed ready for service and to keep our lamps burning". The lamps are the lamps of our faith: They shall shine through the world! And the service is the service to our neighbour. "Don't be afraid, little flock": Share what I give you. Give to the poor. Provide a treasure in heaven. You will not lack anything when you share. I give you enough.

"For where your treasure is, there your heart will be also", said Jesus. If our treasure is only our possessions, our heart will be there. But if our treasure is in heaven, our heart will be there. St. Thomas is here to help each of us to focus our eyes on the right treasure and to be ready dressed when our Lord comes back.

Conclusion: The Psalm for today (33:12-22) tells us about God's blessing upon those who fear Him. I read it again as a blessing upon St. Thomas on our 20<sup>th</sup> Anniversary: "the eyes of the LORD are on those who fear him, on those whose hope is in his unfailing love, to deliver them from death and keep them alive in famine. We wait in hope for the LORD; he is our help and our shield. In him our hearts rejoice, for we trust in his holy name. May your unfailing love be with us, LORD, even as we put our hope in you. Amen."