

Sermon Luke 12 22 40 12th S af P SC

Sermon: 12th Sunday after Pentecost: St. Thomas 23rd Anniversary

Text: Luke 12:22-34 (vv. 31,32)

Theme: Don't fear, little flock

Goal: To focus on God's promises to surpass our fears and anxieties

Dear Friends,

Introduction: It couldn't be a better text for a church's anniversary sermon. It presents thoughts about our priorities, and about our core values and goals; it makes us think about our weaknesses and anxieties; and, above all, the text is full of God's promises for us, "His little flock". It helps us to look back to our history; to analyze our present situation; and to face our future with trust and confidence.

I – Where are our hearts?

The text begins saying: "Therefore, do not worry about your life, what you will eat... or wear." The 'therefore' refers to the previous parable of the Rich Fool; we preached about it last Sunday: A man who was planning to store all his goods in new and big barns and to enjoy life; but God said to him: "You fool! This very night your life will be demanded from you. Then who will get what you have prepared for yourself? This is how it will be with everyone who stores up things for himself but is not rich toward God."

And our text finishes saying: "For where your treasure is, there your heart will be also."

Where is your heart? Is it in your bank account? Is it in your pleasures? Where is St. Thomas' heart? Is it in our savings account? "Core" means heart. What are our Core Values? It is nicely written on our wall: *Loved by God – Loving others*. And this Core Value is developed in eight topics: 1. *God's love is central*. 2. *All people are valuable to God*. 3. *Bible based, Christ centered, inspirational*

worship. 4. Grace orientated. 5. Growth through teaching and sharing. 6. Loving fellowship. 7. Prayer focused. 8. Outreach through friendship and invitation.

Very well written! Are we practicing it?

A commentary wrote: *Are we too worried about paying bills, keeping up buildings, managing ourselves as a congregation? Are we less worried than we ought to be about the things God would have us be concerned about? Here is an interesting test. Is the treasurer's report the first item of business at the voters or council meeting? Does it come before the evangelism report? Have we lost sight of the promise that God will work salvation through us for world?* (Phil Brandt, p. 5).

Where is our heart? It requires a strong analysis of our priorities and of our way of being a Christian church. It is not wrong to take care of ourselves and of our property; but we cannot forget God's bigger mission: To reach others with the Gospel of salvation through faith in Jesus Christ. How much are we invested in this? "Seek His kingdom, and these things will be given to you as well."

II – How can we not be anxious?

But a question remains: How can we not be anxious about tomorrow? Health issues are a big concern. Unemployment hangs like a sword over our head. Political instability in the world changes for the worse every day. We have responsibilities at home, at church and at work. And what about our plans? How anxious we become when something is delayed or doesn't happen the way we had planned it...

These kinds of concerns show how fragile and human we are. We are far to be strong Christians who trust in the Lord for every single

thing in our life. And these fears and anxieties shall bring us closer to the promises of our God.

In the Old Testament reading and also in the Epistle to the Hebrews, we heard about Abraham's faith. He is always set as an example of faith in God's promises. But we know that he was not perfect either, and he had several anxieties. As the promise of God was taking time to come through, first Abraham had chosen his main servant to be his heir. But God assured him: No, Eliezer will not be your heir, but you will have a child. Then, as his wife Sarah couldn't bear him a child, he had a child with Sarah's maidservant, Hagar. He tried twice to solve his anxiety by himself; and it didn't work. Finally, God accomplished His promise and Abraham and Sarah had a child, against all human expectations and probabilities.

Have you ever experienced this too? When you try to take your destiny into your own hands, your anxiety grows even more and you never relax. Everything depends on your decisions, your ability, your skills, your investments. And stress takes over. You and I have experienced this several times in our lives and in the lives of the churches we were and are members now. Could we solve the issues by ourselves???

In this text, Jesus tries to grow the awareness of our incapacity to manage our life and its challenges by ourselves. He calls us as people "of little faith". We depend on Him. He points to the birds and to the lilies, and how God takes care of them. And then He says: "How much more valuable you are than birds" and lilies! God cares for us, and we shall not doubt. Look to your past and to the past of St. Thomas: How many troubled times we had to face; we even didn't see any way out or solution at that time. And at once the sun shined again; maybe from another angle, guiding us through another path, and everything made sense again.

III – God’s promises to His little flock

Even that we are “a little flock”, like St. Thomas, who is not a big church, the promises of God are for us: “Do not be afraid, little flock, for your Father had been please to give you the Kingdom.”

Our experiences were not darker and more hopeless than Good Friday, when Jesus died on the cross. Every hope had gone to the disciples and to Jesus’ friends. But Easter morning showed a new reality! A new life is possible! There is hope! Jesus is alive and is among us. He gives Himself continuously under bread and wine. He guides us through His right paths.

While walking in His paths, we shall not worry so much about ourselves and our possessions. We shall manage them according to God’s will, and not forget the needy. Our treasure must be in heaven, to where all the Faith Heroes of Hebrews 11 were looking for. Every time we face death, like we had Heindry’s mother’s Memorial Service last week, we think about the shortness of our life. When will be our Memorial Service? What will be said about us? And what will happen with our treasures? Only our faith, surrounded by the true good deeds according to the will of God, will follow us to the presence of God.

Conclusion: It seems impossible for us not to worry. God is requiring too much from me. *But it is not too much for our Lord. He tells me not to worry; but immediately He gives the antidote to worry, not my own strength of will or mind, but His promise. I am worth something to God. I am a sheep of His flock, a lamb in His arms. He has a place and a purpose for me in His kingdom here and there.* (Phil, p. 45). Amen.

Pastor Carlos Walter Winterle, Cape Town, 07 August 2016