

## Luke 12:32-40

We are well into the section of Luke's Gospel known as the "travel narrative" where Jesus has now set his sights on Jerusalem. Some folks refer to these chapters in Luke as "Get Ready for the Coming Judgment." Fire and brimstone...The world is ending – repent!!!

And unfortunately, I think it is the source of some truly bad theology, see it's one based on fear...and I don't believe trust in a loving God should ever be based on fear!

Instead, Jesus is inviting us into the present "NOW" and we are all invited to search our hearts and to be present to the kingdom of God NOW!!! Not some future date...because the future is only ever NOW! That's ALL we are ever given. NOW!

So don't worry about the end of the world 'cause we will ALL experience our own end of the world narratives regardless...Hate to break the news to ya... Ain't none of us getting outta here alive! All our world's will in fact end!

In American Culture it's interesting that what consumes most of our time and efforts each day is addressing fear, scarcity and social status...

The focus is squarely on worldly longings... yet throughout the gospels, Jesus reveals to us a loving God who you can trust...fear not little ones...

A God who will provide you just what you need, a God who tells us that you matter and that you belong...You are a child of God... and there are NO exceptions ...regardless of what someone or some religion tells you!

Today Jesus is literally and figuratively looking death squarely in the eyes...the cross is firmly in His sights. This is all about Perspective!

Each week it seems there are some really bad things happening out there in our own world. You hear about shootings, hatred, war...arguments over who's lives matter more. Labels, Prejudices, Fears...

You see the current systems of power pushing back on the oppressed to maintain their own status quo... Ultimately in the kingdom of man...my self-worth and power come at the cost of yours. My security comes at the cost of your fear. My belonging to the right group comes at the cost of your and dehumanization.

...and of course this oppression is all happening just below the surface...and just out of our site... Where does your clothing come from...watch a film called “total cost” on Netflix

...has anyone here eaten a tomato this past winter...Did you know to get that tomato it cost the quality of life of Hattians and Dominicans who were brought into Florida on the promise of security and a better life for their families... and devolves into slave labor camps and human trafficking yes right here in this country.

See for us to live so much better than everyone else in the world comes with a heavy price tag... and that cost is always born by the “least of these” - the folks at the margins whom no-one will notice if they are treated less than human.

And when Jesus was here, he made sure to be “present” to those at the very margins of His society: to SHOW them that Samaritan Lives mattered, Lepers lives mattered, Women and children’s lives mattered, even Roman’s lives mattered to God...see all these people groups at the time of Jesus didn’t matter to the chosen people of God! Has anything changed today? Aren’t we American’s the chosen today?

Isn’t that what we claim to be...the people of God... so who are the outsiders for us...who is wrong at the cost of us being right? What Jesus was trying to say was that there is no “outside” group in God’s Point of View... we are all a part of a larger universal family where everyone belongs, everyone is worthy, everyone matters, and everyone is loved.

Hear in America we gotta have enough...we gotta have more...we gotta have the latest and greatest...Then there’s that four letter F word which I cringe at every time I hear it - FEAR –

You know the bible says do not be afraid 365 times – that’s once for every single day of the year...then there’s this idea of belonging...Am I in the right group to validate my own security and self-worth? And these are very human longings!

Scarcity, fear, belonging. A few weeks back when the news was rampant with more shootings, while feeling very powerless and upset... I got a call from someone telling me that they needed me to give last rites...The person’s family was there when I arrived...

I couldn’t be present for all those who were hurting that week, but I could focus and be present with a family literally facing death right there in front of me...NOW...perspective!

Jesus is living out this scenario...and he invites us to do the same...and Jesus isn’t just addressing literal death here... he is also inviting us to die to the ways of the world...to our ego and the fixation we have on the things that trouble our hearts...I don’t have enough; I don’t fit in and I don’t know what bad things may happen to me tomorrow.

Jesus was unsettling the establishment and power structure. “Do not fear those who kill the body,” he says, even in the face of his own death. He is preaching a reliance and trust in God...and not because the system will then work now better for YOU... but rather because God’s system IS the system...the way things actually work...a way that provides just enough for everyone...a way that shows us that we all matter and belong...that we are all connected...the way of love in the face of fear.

Jesus is saying, ‘Keep nothing. Nothing at all! Cause in the end, “things” don’t matter.’ Life does not consist of collecting stuff in an effort to gain self-worth, self-reliance and security...Life is only ever about relationships!

Investing in things that the world says matters will never save you from our end here on earth. And fixation on worldly stuff will only disconnect us from living as freely as we were intended... in harmony with God and with one another. Connected in Relationship!

Do not be afraid my brothers and sisters for it is our Father's good pleasure to give to you ALL the kingdom.

Be dressed for action and have your lamps lit - "Jesus is coming: Look Busy!" Guess what folks if you haven't heard anything I said...hear this...Jesus is already HERE!

There's a cartoon I have of two priests holding the door shut to their church as Jesus is trying to get in...one priest yells out don't let him in he'll change everything...and you better believe it!

No one knows when Jesus will come a knockin'... But if we are the body of Christ then we have to assume Jesus comes into the world every single day.

We have to assume we meet Jesus over and over again, on the road to the shore or in the aisles at Shop Rite. We have to assume the Son of Man is coming like the person ringing the church doorbell in hopes of being given a few dollars for gas or food. We have to assume we will meet him or her in the addict on main street or in the twinkling eyes of the homebound we visit.

We need to wake up to the reality that God's kingdom is already here... being revealed in relationship with one another.

Love is in direct opposition to fear! Yet fear is still our greatest motivator! Sometimes the fear is real and sometimes it's imagined! Mark Twain once said "I've had a lot of worries in my life, most of which never happened."

When faced with a situation or circumstance that puts our anxiety to the test we need to reflect not on the fear so much as to the notion of Trust in God...Trust! Can we really trust God when our lives are in the toilet!

As I said before there is no such word as Faith in Hebrew...the gods for the ancient world were a given - so it would be like me asking you whether you believe in Oxygen...the word is Aman - to trust or rely on.

And during the time of Jesus...Fear was a big part in the way Rome kept the Peace...The Pax Romana. In ancient Rome capricious and cruel gods exacted inconsistent “justice”. Humans had no options other than to simply accept their whims.

See people in the ancient world really couldn't trust their gods & remember Cesare was also among the gods – how convenient! Be wary...gods can easily be employed or co-opted into serving us when it's in OUR best interest... including our own God!

Gandhi once remarked, “I like your Christ, I do not like your Christians. You Christians are so unlike your Christ.”

Even within the church some of us may find ourselves agreeing with this statement because eventually human beings unfortunately can so often disappoint us and let us down.

But it is exactly through human beings - fragile broken vessels like you and me...it is exactly through us... that God's love and grace is borne into the dark places of the world...

God comes to you my friends wherever and however you are...and so too you must NOW go out to others in the same way!

Thinking of ourselves and our own tribes are still the way most of us live each day. Insecurity, Fear, and scarcity still rules our hearts... ultimately dictating our actions...or inactions. Fear closes our hearts while love opens them up!

In today's gospel Jesus reiterates that where our treasure lies there our hearts lie. So look at how you spend your time and your money and you will know exactly what is being reflected in your own hearts!

Jesus now heads towards Jerusalem... the place and epicenter of where God's people dwelled... but instead - like all people in power - they have come to trust not in the will of God but in their own will and power...They have co-opted and created god in their image! Much like we do today.

Like I like to say: a group of people always acts just like a group of people!

See it is actually our own will being reflected...not seeing as God sees but rather seeing a reflection of ourselves! God has now been created in the image of man. For all our technological advances not much has changed in the human heart!

...and that is why the prophets were always seen as a threat and eliminated! Do we have people and organizations and groups today that have created God in their image? Our failure many times within our own religion and our own view of God, is really just a failure of our imagination...a failure to imagine an unlimited God in our own limited human minds.

God's will is inclusive and relational encompassing all of creation...while our will is usually tribal, exclusive and focused on the self...it's ego driven.

Inward focusing or outward focusing?! Closed or Open! Fear or Love! And we get to choose... but for us Christians...we are required to be Christ's light in the world...to expose the deceptions and illusions of the world for what they are!

True power is the ability to surrender our own power and to allow God's power to work through us! Whether to surrender your worldview as Abraham had to, whether to surrender your freedom as Paul had to, or whether to surrender your life as Jesus had to...they all trusted in God's bigger will for creation.

True power is being able to have the courage, conviction and trust to sacrifice one's self for a greater good...sacrificing one's own tribal thinking to come to experience our own communal, divine self...to know that by looking up and trying to count the stars in the heavens you will come to realize true power and the eternal truth - that we are all connected...and maybe we can begin to see all of creation as holy and sacred as one - the way our Creator sees it.

So let us strive together as a church to be a people of imagination and vision. Let us resist the powers of the world who would seek to deceive us and silence us through fear...Let us confront wrong wherever we find it... always determined to live as God's children.

And when gripped or paralyzed by fear let us look to Jesus to transcend our circumstances... and let's put our trust in a loving God who ultimately will protect all her children from all their fears - real or imagined!

For Blessed is the one who trusts God and sees all of creation as God sees it!

...and Blessed is the one who comes in the name of the Lord...for the kingdom is indeed here and now...for Jesus comes into this world every single day through you and me!

Shalom my friends...Shalom!

Your faithful servant,

carmen