

## **The kingdom is Yours!**

Luke 12:22–34

Dear Friends in Christ!

Fellow inheritors of the Kingdom! May God's peace be with you!

Last Sunday we heard that is not a matter of how much to have but what we do with what we have. Being rich is not about having lots but needing less, and from the Gospel reading we heard that we need to be rich towards God.

But being rich towards God is not that easy, especially when we have to fend for ourselves in this world. When from day to day we have to eat, we have clothing and medicine to buy, we have to have a roof over our heads and food. Then add all the expenses we have brought upon ourselves, mortgages, cars, insurance, monthly gym fees, and so on....

How can we be rich to God when really, if we have money is because we have worked hard for it. And no, we are not socialists to be sharing with those in need, let them work. Right!? Yet in today's lesson Jesus continues teaching us that, yes it is possible, because he is the provider, he is giver of all good things, in fact Jesus says, it is possible to be rich toward God, because in Christ, we are inheritors of his kingdom. He says: "Fear not, little flock, for it is your Father's good pleasure to give you the kingdom." V. 32

Really, sounds nice, but many times, doesn't make sense, or doesn't feel like it. First, we don't know what that Kingdom is, or looks like. Second, the life that surrounds us, the life that we are immersed in, doesn't feel like we have a kingdom.

Well, the kingdom is for the present, and for the future. Although, what is to come, the kingdom of the future is nothing compared with the present, yet, in faith Jesus says we do have a kingdom, here and now.

But this kingdom has at its heart, something special, the gift of faith. The gift of faith that in Christ, and through Christ we do receive from God through the power of the Holy Spirit. It is the same faith that people, men, and women from old hang on to, live by, and practiced, and of which we do hear today, as the letter to the Hebrews remind us.

Our readings for today, start with Abraham. A simple man, who was blessed in a great way, to be sure. Yet at some point in his life experienced something that we could be experiencing today. His future appeared gloomy. God had offered him a Land, rich in honey and milk were he could make a wonderful and far reaching life and legacy. He did take God's offer, and started his journey to the promised land, Canaan. Yet, at some point he found himself wandering about, and on top of that, he was promised he would be a great nation, and yet he and his wife had no children; a servant in his house was listed as his heir. I imagine Abram heard about it from Sarai. You can probably hear it too. "We're getting old." "Didn't we have it better before?" "Should we really believe these great promises? They seem too good to be true."

So, Sarai gets so frustrated by their lack of a good future, so much that she takes matters into her own hand and gives Abram her maid to try to give God "a hand" to make the promises real. Though Abram and Sarai had the clear word of God that good things were ahead of them, starting with their very own son, descendants as the stars of the heavens,.. yet they were worried and uncertain.

Sound familiar? An uncertain future? Has Suffering ever come your way for making rash and strange decisions? for deviating from God's clear plan and future? It is a struggle to reconcile the happenings of our day and what is our future according to the promises of God's Word, isn't it. We have inherited a Kingdom you say, but... we can relate to Abram in many ways. Nevertheless, the Word tells us today that he believes, and it is credited to him as God's righteousness.

Abraham and Sarai didn't do it all right. They didn't have it all figured out. Yet God loved them still, richly blessed them, and gave them a far more beautiful future and hope than they could ever expect. They are examples to us. In fact, we are numbered by faith with Abraham and Sarai as God's sons and daughters.

But previous to Abraham and Sarah, we have great people that lived by faith in the hopes of a new and true Kingdom. We have Abel who worshiped God the right way. Then we have Enoch who was taken up to the promised land, so that he should not see death. "By faith Noah, being warned by God concerning events as yet unseen, in reverent fear constructed an ark for the saving of his household." Now of course the outcome of their faith we know, we appreciate and wish to have the same kind of

outcome. Don't we. But it is only when we read and learn some more about them, we realize that they too, went through a time of doubt and despair. Perhaps more so than we go through from time to time. We do have their legacy and want to learn from them. Yet it is not easy, right?

The letter to the Hebrews, elaborates a bit more in the lives of Abraham and Sarah, because they certainly give us an active example of a journey towards the Promised Land. Theirs was Canaan, ours is Heaven. No, it is not here on earth that we will experience fully the true Kingdom, what we see here is only a glimpse of what is to come. None the less once we are in Christ, the Kingdom has already started.

Like he promised Abraham and Sarah, the Father has promised you a rich inheritance, a bright and enduring future, a place within the Father's house. Therefore, Jesus says, "Fear not, little flock, for it is your Father's good pleasure to give you the kingdom."

All we need to do then as we make our journey is to realize, trust and cling to the truth, that His Kingdom has already started in Jesus, and in that Kingdom God will take care of my body and "He also gives me clothing and shoes, food and drink, house and home, wife and children, land, animals, and all I have. He richly and daily provides me with all that I need to support this body and life. He defends me against all danger and guards and protects me from all evil. All this He does only out of fatherly, divine goodness and mercy, without any merit or worthiness in me." (Catechism: Apostles Creed, The first article)

Sounds good but... our anxieties still continue, our worries get the best of us. The need for food and other material things still preoccupies us. The threat of social issues scare us and keep us awake at night. Yet we hear Jesus saying: "Therefore I tell you, do not be anxious about your life, what you will eat, nor about your body, what you will put on." "For life is more than food, and the body more than clothing." How about our heavenly home? Well of course, but as you see we are still on this side of eternity. And so we are prone to be scared by what the world chases after, denies us, or simply by the trends of reason, philosophy and or choices we see all around.

Even the small things Jesus says we are to be aware that they don't push us into despair.

That's what Abraham and Sarah had to contend with. Sure, they believed God, and started the journey to the promised land, but there were major road blocks.

Abraham, for example, found himself with a hope that seemed impossible, think about this, he was seventy-five years at this point, Sarah was past her child-bearing stage. Hearing from God that they were going to have a child for the first time. Seemed impossible, if not totally absurd. But the Word of God contradicts Abram's future despair (vv 1, 4). No, Abram and Sarai's you will have a son. God was going to make the impossible, possible. Now why would God do that? God's actions, his promises fulfilled, the arrival of a son to Abraham and Sarah, would have eternal consequences, not only for them but even for us today. Because through the gift of a son, Isaac, God was pointing to a greater Son yet to come. God's Son, Christ Jesus, makes you an heir in the Father's house just as he is.

I can picture that it was lonely for Abram and Sarai, even when they had all kinds of people around, material possessions God had bestowed on them, yet without an heir, it was pretty lonely for them. It seemed as if the family name was cut off, the family tree having no branches (v 3). This is also a reality for many Christians today. And not necessary because of the absence of children, but because of the absence of meaningful relationships, or the emptiness the false hope in material possession creates. The pandemic surely revealed us in a direct way for many.

Somebody wrote this comment not long ago: "These past years been very tough to me. I've been challenged mentally, emotionally and certainly spiritually. ... We all have these daily struggles that we deal with that can keep us up late at night...."

The World Health organization says that "COVID-19 pandemic triggered an 25% increase in prevalence of anxiety and depression worldwide"

Reports of burnt-out employees increased exponentially, the regular maladies we suffer even without a pandemic, remain. So, reasons to be anxious and loose hope? They abound.

So, Abraham was given a heavenly object lesson. He was told to look outside himself. He was directed to look to the stars (v 5a). He was shown that the One who was promising the something and loved them, was the one who created all of that. The promise is more than he could even take in with the eyes. "So shall your family be, as

the stars in the heavens, if you can even count them” (v 5b). he was told. In the end Abraham hoped for one, yet he was given millions if not billions.

But, here we are this morning. What are you hoping for today? I hope that we all are hoping for Jesus, for he is the bright morning star. I hope we too can look beyond ourselves and look to the stars. And more than the stars, but look to the cross, look to the table set for us to receive the Morning Star, who has promised he will be with us.

The kingdom that is already with and with us, is found in the Church, for the Church reflects his glory. This Kingdom is not of material possessions, or the promise that you will be prosperous financially, rather it is a Kingdom that is marked by God’s grace, forgiveness and salvation, so that in the end we will inherit that promised land, our Heavenly Canaan.

For now, we journey, but we don’t journey alone. We journey in family. This is your Christian family. With these, one day you will stand in glory. With these patriarchs, kings, queens, and beautiful Christians, you have a fellowship forever. But for now, with this family, we pray for Christ’s return. These are the answer to your loneliness. These are the answers to our anxieties. We rejoice with those who rejoice, and we cry with those who cry. We are not alone...

Worries, anxiety...I emphasize these maladies because, well we don’t suffer so much materially, do we? No sr. we suffer when we chase after them and trust them solely, absolutely. But that’s the thing, material possessions have proven not to give us life, the love for money surely will bring us death.

“For all the nations of the world seek after these things, and your Father knows that you need them. Instead, seek his kingdom, and these things will be added to you.”

Look outside yourself, seek instead, the Kingdom. Look outside yourself, be part of the Kingdom. That’s your inheritance! It is yours, here and now! It is an enduring eternal heritage that God has provided you with. The gates of hell cannot overcome this kingdom. Likewise our anxieties and worries, cannot destroy our joy in this kingdoms, unless we let them, but take courage we know who we belong too. He is the creator of the Universe, he is the one who loves us, and truly loves us even to death!

You aren’t the first to have worries, struggles, loneliness, problems. The Father in heaven loves the fathers, gifts the greater Son, the greater family, provides a future and

a hope. It was in the beginning, it is now, and it ever shall be. “He believed the Lord, and he counted it to him as righteousness.” Yours is a rich inheritance from Abraham, from your Father in heaven who loves you. So may you also believe.

As we reflect on our journey looking forward to our heavenly home, we sing verses 5-6 of hymn 798.

Amen.