

Thy Kingdom Come Luke 12: 32-40

Security is a word that we now hear quite often, meaning to be free from physical harm caused by others. We live in an age where security is a high priority. We have border security, airport security, internet security, security guards, security fences and security systems. Even so, the recent attacks in El Paso and Dayton remind us that we are never free from danger living in a world filled with evil and sin. Though we are always seeking new ways to try to prevent people from intentionally harming us, the reality is that hatred will drive people to find new ways to accomplish those kinds of sinful acts.

Many changes have been made since to make us feel more secure. The Department of Homeland Security was established to implement new security measures nationwide. If you travel by air, passengers and their luggage are required to pass through metal detectors and body scanners meant to detect illegal weapons and explosives. Your shoes, your jacket and any electronic devices have to be x-rayed before you can go aboard an aircraft. Liquids and gels must be placed in a small Ziploc bag if you expect to take them with you. And depending on your luck, you could be physically searched to determine if you are trying to smuggle illegal items on board.

Those are necessary measures meant to hinder terrorists from using an airplane again as a weapon to kill large numbers of people. I use the word hinder rather than prevent because hate will drive people to find new ways to accomplish their sinful acts. Our best hope is to be more prepared today than we were yesterday to deal with this problem. Try as we may, the reality is that there are no political solutions to spiritual problems.

Security is also a concern on a more personal level. Many of us have taken steps to protect our families, our homes and our buildings from attack. We carry pepper spray to use against a potential attacker, we install locks on our doors and windows, powerful lights to eliminate the cover of darkness, alarm systems to notify authorities if someone breaks in, and security cameras to record activity for future use. We do these things to try and prevent someone from causing harm or taking what does not belong to him or her. We live in a world tainted by evil and sin, so we do have to be prepared for the possibility of unwelcome intruders.

This is really nothing new. Folks that lived in biblical times faced similar problems. Though they certainly did not have to worry about airline hijackers or deranged people with guns and knives, they did face the threat of attack from foreign invaders. They did need to protect themselves against robbers and bandits while traveling. Remember the parable of the Good Samaritan? And according to the scripture reading this morning, they also needed to protect their homes from thieves.

Dates and places have changed, but the problems facing humanity have not. The good news is that we as Christians can look forward to a time when we will no longer have to concern ourselves with these problems. The Bible speaks of a place where “no thief comes near”. It will be a secure place without terrorists, foreign invaders, hijackers, guns, knives, bombs, locks, security alarms or surveillance cameras. Whether it will be surrounded by a great wall remains to be seen, but the Bible does reveal that great “chasm” will be fixed to keep those who seek to do harm away. (Luke 16:26).

There is only one place that is truly secure and it is the kingdom of heaven. We can only imagine what such a place will be like, and perhaps the most amazing thing is that it is God’s pleasure to give it to us! Verse 32 reveals that it is a gift, one offered to us by grace through faith in Jesus Christ by His work for our sake on the cross. It can’t be earned or bought, just accepted.

Our Scripture lesson this morning is centered upon 3 things: vigilance, security and being prepared to meet Jesus. How ready are we? That question may strike fear in the hearts of some, and skepticism in others. At times even the most devout Christians may honestly say that they are not as prepared as they would like to be. Yet Jesus tells us in that same verse not to be anxious or afraid, because the Father wants us to have the kingdom. The Scriptures reveal that will happen one of two ways - we will die and meet Jesus in paradise, or we will be alive when He returns for His church at the rapture. Yet this passage suggests that the kingdom that God desires to give us is not just something that lies ahead but one that we can begin to enjoy here and now, even with its trials and tribulations. One of the ways we prepare to receive the kingdom is by recognizing that it is both here and now and there and later.

The fullness of God's kingdom will not be experienced here on this earth, yet it has already begun. It seems clear that our real home is not the physical place we live in now but in the kingdom of God. The question to be answered is what are we going to furnish it with? In some ways our life on this earth is like packing our bags for a vacation or a business trip- we only bring along the things that are necessary for the trip. We leave the furniture, the lawn mower and the Christmas decorations at home. They would be a burden to carry and eventually they wear out.

Jesus tells us in verse 33 to get rid of our excess baggage. Sell your possessions, help those in need and "make purses for yourselves that do not wear out, an unfailing treasure in heaven, where no thief comes and no moth destroys". He is talking about spiritual things here- prayer, bible study and gathering together on a regular basis for praise and worship. Methodists recognize those things as means of grace. Through them God gives us what we need to share in the kingdom. **The kingdom of God begins when our heart is in the right place.** When we seek the kingdom of heaven rather than earthly treasures, we will hear His voice and the Holy Spirit will move us in the right direction.

He also tells us in verse 35 to "be dressed for action and have your lamps lit". In other words, have your day clothes on and leave the porch light on because I am coming soon. When he knocks at the door, will you be there to open it? Or will you be in your pajamas or on vacation somewhere...

So should we stop sleeping at night and taking vacations? Of course not. However, we also shouldn't go to sleep or take a trip without being prepared for Jesus to come again. Look at what is in store for those who do.

Luke 12:37 is one of the most astounding verses in all of the Scriptures. Look at it with me- "It will be good for those servants whose master finds them watching when he comes. I tell you the truth, he will dress himself to serve, will have them recline at the table and will come and wait on them". I don't know about you, but I can't quite imagine what it will be like to be served a meal by the Lord himself. Are you ready to be served the best meal that you will ever eat?

Speaking of meals, usually when you go to a really good restaurant you usually have to wait. The problem with many of us is that we don't like to wait. In fact, some of us hate to wait. It is so easy to forget that waiting allows us to anticipate the good things to come. Christians have been waiting for our Lord to return for more than 2000 years. We might have to wait for another 2000, or Christ might come in the next few seconds. It really shouldn't matter when, as long as we are prepared.

Elsewhere in the Scriptures Jesus reminds us not to be afraid. "Do not let your hearts be troubled. Trust in God, trust also in me. In my Father's house are many rooms; if it were not so, I would have told you. I am going there to prepare a place for you. And if I go and prepare a place for you, I will come back and take you to be with me that you also may be where I am. You know the way to the place where I am going."

Jesus has prepared a place for us. Are we prepared to be there with Him? Will you pray with me? Father, we thank you this morning for wanting us to spend eternity with you. It is our prayer this morning that everyone that desires to know you will be prepared to meet Jesus and receive their promised place in the kingdom. O Holy Spirit, teach us to store up treasures in heaven, and provide confidence and security in knowing that Jesus Christ is our Lord and Savior. For it is in His name we pray, Amen.