

## Wicker Park Lutheran Church

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*May these words of my mouth and this meditation of all our hearts be acceptable to you O Lord, our Faith and our Hope. Amen.*

- The theme for Jesus' message today seems to be "hurry up, and wait."
  - Perhaps you're familiar with this phrase, it's often used to describe the practice of needing to be vigilantly prepared for something that's about to happen.
    - It's not so much about simply being in the right place at the right time,
    - But it's about being there, and having every single detail of what you need to get done already accomplished and prepared so that the minute the true task comes to hand, not a moment is lost in accomplishing it.
      - In fact, this also describes my day-to-day rhythm when I'm visiting patients at clinics during my chaplaincy work
      - Most of my job is actually spent, standing in the hallways of the clinics, waiting for a moment when I can get into a patient's exam room
        - I have to make sure I have all of my info prepped and correct so that the minute there's a window of opportunity between the provider, care coordinator, case manager, and lab technicians all seeing the patient, I can also get in to provide spiritual care.
      - It's a lot of hurrying up and urgency, simply to wait for an opportune moment
    - And, in some cases, the moment doesn't arrive, and I simply resign myself to hopefully having a better chance next time
- It's hard not to get a sense of urgency from Jesus' words in today's gospel as he describes the Kingdom of God.

- Reading through this passage of Luke and listening to language such as
  - Be dressed for action and have your lamps lit,
  - Open the door as soon as it knocked,
  - Be ready even in the middle of the night or near dawn
  - It was tough *not* to get a sense of expeditious urgency to what Jesus says.
    - Admittedly, while preparing this sermon I often had the Lion King soundtrack playing in my head, particularly the voice of Scar singing: “Be Prepared!”
- Yes, preparedness and urgency seem to be the overarching theme of Jesus’ words today, yet it also seems to be a sort of impossible or unattainable urgency.
  - To be prepared for something to happen at any hour of the day, to even be fully prepared at midnight or near dawn, seems to be an impossible task.
  - In broader terms, Jesus speaks and teaches in this passage about the “kingdom of God” or the concept of God’s reality.
    - He starts with a word of comfort saying “do not be afraid, little flock” and assures his listener’s that it is pleasing to God to give the gift of the kingdom
    - He then gives Instructions for almsgiving, making distinctions that true wealth and treasure is not in having possessions in this world, but in heavenly matters, and then explains the need for preparedness:
    - He gives instruction through a couple of parables, one of a group of servants being prepared for the return of their master, and one of a homeowner being able to avoid thievery if they knew what time the thief would come.
  - Though this passage is short, there is a lot going on here, and Jesus covers a lot of ground.
    - This but one of many passages wherein Jesus gives a lesson or tells a parable rooted in concept of the Kingdom of God.
- And, in this context, the fact that Jesus speaks of such urgent preparation almost becomes paradoxical.

- Being constantly prepared for the arrival of a new Kingdom, a new way of being, a completely reshaped order of everything that exists is a remarkably tall order to.
- Which is why, the urgency that Jesus instructs the followers to have is not about preparing for some singular event, it's not about just waiting around until God knocks on our proverbial doors and says "alright, it's showtime"
  - Rather, it's about being aware of and participating in the unraveling and reconstruction of the very fabric of reality such that the aforementioned preparation is a foregone conclusion.
- But maybe I'm getting ahead of myself,
  - And you would be right to ask "where did all of this talk of unraveling the world come from just now?"
    - So, some context.
- Admittedly, all of that talk and language came from 11 chapters prior to the one we read from today. Specifically, the 46<sup>th</sup> through the 55<sup>th</sup> verses from the first chapter of Luke.
  - The famous passage known as the Magnificat or Mary's song, I think, is the lens through which all of Jesus' actions and lessons must be examined through
    - Because Mary knew, from the outset, what her son, God incarnate, would accomplish as she sings:
    - "My soul magnifies the Lord, and my spirit rejoices in God my Savior
    - For he has looked with favor on the lowly state of his servant.
    - He has shown strength with his arm; he has scattered the proud in the imagination of their hearts.
    - He has brought down the powerful from their thrones and lifted up the lowly;
    - He has filled the hungry with good things and sent the rich away empty.
  - And notice that Mary sings about the things God has yet to do through Jesus as if they had already happened.
  - She is so certain of what Jesus will do, that she sings about with the certainty of the past-tense.

- This song of praise and foreshadowing is gorgeous and an incredible statement of faith from Jesus' mother,
  - And yet, it is not the most comforting of passages, much in the same way Jesus' teachings on being prepared for the kingdom is not the most comforting.
    - Because, at the center of it all, is the upheaval of every system that governs the world
    - And while talking of upheaval and unraveling often gets treated as a fun little thought exercise, in practice it is unsettling, tumultuous, and even scary at times.
- The kingdom of God that Jesus preaches about, that Jesus urges us to be prepared for, is an entirely new way of existing
  - It's a reality where the old systems of power, privilege, charity, and governance are done away with so that a new reality of equity, love, respect, and communal prosperity might take its place
  - But, as we are seeing today, the complete upheaval of the way things are does not simply happen overnight.
    - So, how then are we supposed to be so urgently prepared for it?
- By recognizing that it is already here, and also still on the way.
  - The preparedness that Jesus speaks of in such an urgent fashion is a preparedness that fully shifts the ways in which we show up and interact with the world.
  - I mentioned earlier that this preparedness for the kingdom of God would be a foregone conclusion and what I mean by that is when we are aligned with God's kingdom, we show up in this life and act in such a way that the Kingdom is brought even closer to being fully realized.
    - There is no singular moment where we will know with certainty that the fullness of the kingdom is on the way.
      - So, the best way to be prepared is to live as though it already was.
      - By loving those around us, meeting their needs, comforting the grieving, healing the sick, visiting the lonely, and yes even tearing the powerful off their thrones as Mary sang about in the Magnificat.

- When we live as though the Kingdom was here, it is brought ever closer to being our full reality.
- What better time than the one we currently live in to bring about the Kingdom?
  - There's already no shortage of upheaval in this world as we struggle to discover what the next era will look like.
    - And though it seems that every week there is yet another once-in-a-century, era-defining event, I wonder if we might consider them pangs of a new reality being birthed into existence?
  - It's easy to consider everything going and to give up in dismay because it seems insurmountable
    - Yet "faith is the assurance of things hoped for, and the conviction of things not seen."
  - So let us prepare, let us live as though God's Kingdom of equity and radical love were already here, so that it might make its way more fully here, in us, through us, and around us.
  - Amen