

“Better Be Ready”

Luke 12:32-40

Two young missionaries were going door to door. They knocked on the door of one woman who was not at all happy to see them. She told them in no uncertain terms that she didn't want to hear their message and slammed the door in their faces. To her surprise, however, the door didn't close and, in fact, almost magically bounced back open. (My visit with one of our inactive members this week)

She tried again, really putting her back into it and slammed the door again with the same amazing result—the door bounced back open.

Convinced that one of the young zealots was sticking his foot in the door, she reared back to give it a third slam—she felt she really needed to teach them a lesson. But before she could act, one of them stopped her and politely said, “Ma'am, before you do that again you really should consider moving your cat.”

This lady had no interest in hearing what these young men had to say! I wonder if her cat, probably just a tad dazed at this point wished she was a little more receptive. I doubt if they were trying to sell her anything—I doubt if they were doing one of those time-consuming worthless surveys—and I don't think they were trying to get her to sign a petition. All they wanted to do was share the “Good News.”

Of course, that's what the word Gospel means = “Good News.” The Gospels were Good News to a hurting nation looking for some kind of hope. Couldn't we all use a bit of Good News today?

In the NIV translation that I read Jesus is calling the crowd **“Little flock.”** Eugene Peterson, in his Message Translation writes: **“You’re my dearest friends.”** Jesus is getting personal with the crowd He is speaking to and to us. He wanted them to know, and He wants us to know how special we are to Him. And He’s not trying to sell anything either—in fact, He wants to give us something—He wants to **give us the kingdom!**

I can honestly stand before you this morning and say I have never worn out a purse—maybe a few wallets but never a purse. Now granted, in Jesus’ day men didn’t need to carry around three picture ID’s as proof of who they were. They didn’t carry credit cards, insurance cards, driver’s licenses, blood donor cards, business cards, and every school picture ever taken of their children. My point being that for a purse or wallet to not wear out it must not be used—if you don’t use it, you won’t wear it out. Jesus said, **“Sell your possessions and give to the poor.”** I don’t think Jesus is expecting you to sell everything you have and live in poverty but all of us have some possessions that actually possess us! So, what He’s saying is sell them and give the proceeds to the poor. Give it away—don’t carry it around with you.

In a book that I’m currently reading, *Renovation of the Heart*, author Dallas Willard writes that it’s our ideas and thoughts that get us into trouble. It’s our thoughts and ideas that take us away from God; in fact, they convince us that we are our own God.

The Apostle Paul knew a little something about this and said that we could escape being conformed to fallen humanity only by receiving the mind of

Christ Himself. Spiritual formation in Christ moves toward a total interchange of *our* ideas and images for *his*.

The key to all of this is information. Without correct information, our ability to think has nothing to work on. The “Good News” that Jesus wants to share is where we need to go for our information!

Jesus says, “**Be dressed and ready for service.**” If you ever meet Katie, our youngest, she can tell you her version of what it means around our house when I say, “The bus or the train is leaving at 8:15.” It means, if you come out the door at 8:16, the bus or the train has probably left without you.

To illustrate this Jesus tells us about the master who returns and finds his servants dressed and ready for service—that the master will get dressed and serve the servants.

That’s not how things worked in the world back then—probably not now either—the master serving the servants. But that’s Jesus for you! He came to serve and not be served. He came to turn the world upside down. Look at the Last Supper which we have celebrated and remembered this morning. He wrapped a towel around His waist and washed the feet of the disciples—even the feet of Judas who would sell Him out for a few silver coins. He set us an example of serving!

Jesus hung out with the riff raff of society—the low lives: sinners—tax collectors—women—Samaritans. He ate with those sinners—allowed women into His inner circle. He took the church out of the Temple and took it to the beach—to a plain—a boat—a garden—a mountain top—and on the road. He took it to

anyone who would listen. And it was free—it was and is a gift!

Curtis Mayfield was the lead singer in the 60's for a group called "The Impressions." The decade of the 60's was a very turbulent time in our history and a decade that I lived through and witnessed for myself. Our nation was in much confusion—from the Viet Nam conflict to the assassinations of JFK, Martin Luther King, and Bobby Kennedy. There were many reasons to be afraid during those ten years and there are many things that make us fearful in this year of 2022. Curtis Mayfield, like many others, understood that something great was on the horizon and he penned a song that has been recorded by several artists—the chorus goes like this:

People get ready—there's a train a comin'

You don't need no baggage—you just get on board

All you need is faith—to hear the diesels hummin'

Don't need no ticket

You just thank the Lord.

People get ready—this is the message of Jesus—we "**Better Be Ready.**" We are called to be unafraid—to sell our possessions, or at least the ones that possess us (don't need no baggage)—to be dressed for service—and ready to open the door when the master returns.

Thanks be to God!