

Sermon
August 10, 2025

Genesis 15:1-6
Psalm 33:12-22
Hebrews 11:1-3, 8-16
Luke 12:32-40

There are places in the Bible where the scripture is relatively easy to follow. The metaphors of sheep and shepherd are reasonably easy to grasp intellectually. Allegories to flowing rivers and the like are felt in our hearts. Parables can be a bit tricky at times – primarily, they prompt us to see our world through the upside-down world of Jesus' ministry.

This section of Luke's gospel that we are given today is not an easy read. The references touchpoints are a bit out of sync with our world.

There are references made to purses that are free of moths, there are lamps to be kept lit, and doors to be locked. We are to beware of thieves at the door. And of course, there are the uncomfortable references to master and slave.

The three "lessons" we are given from Jesus are short, and if they are only given a superficial read, they can be quite cryptic. I can get through the first two with a somewhat comfortable understanding.

The first is about ceasing to be anxious in the presence of God, and the second is about being alert and ready to find Jesus in our lives.

But when we get to the third lesson about a thief coming to break into the house at an unexpected hour, I, like many people, have to struggle to fit with the first two lessons. I have had this bit explained to me several times in my life, but it is always a stretch for my rational mind.

And maybe that's the first thing we are meant to learn from this third lesson. It isn't written for the rational mind. It is written for the imagination. When we encounter these challenges, rather than skimming over them, perhaps it's a good time to pause, reframe our perspective, and tackle the reading again with a different approach.

While there are scriptural passages that might be best "thought through," other passages are best "felt."

Think of Psalm 23. The LORD is my shepherd; I shall not want.

² He maketh me to lie down in green pastures: he leadeth me beside the still waters.

Definitely a 'felt' bit of scripture.

There are pieces in the scripture that we read, and they sink into our hearts and souls. They feel genuine. We say, These words, this message speaks to me."

And this can be a truly moment-changing experience. I love these moments. I wish reading the scripture always felt like that. In times of personal struggle, I will return to these scriptural passages for comfort and reframing.

But not all scriptural passages sit comfortably in this way.

There are passages of scripture that are very hard to understand. Some make me uncomfortable. Some words pinch.

I struggle with words or stories that gloss over institutional injustices.

But what these stories or words, or concepts, provoke is reflection of my faith. Reading words and ideas that are comfortable is soothing. And there is undoubtedly a place for that. But we should remember they don't necessarily provide opportunities for learning. They don't necessarily provoke us to stretch ourselves.

Today's passage from the Gospel of Luke gives us a strange story content that is filled with unfamiliar imagery and cryptic messaging, but by spending time with this gospel writer's offering, the stories begin to blend into something coherent.

We read: **Do not be afraid, for it is your Father's good pleasure to give you the kingdom.** This first message implores us to reduce our anxiety a bit. Trust in God, follow God, and jettison from our lives that which does not bring us closer to God.

Now, telling someone to stop being so anxious is a completely useless way to help someone become less anxious. And that is **not** what is going on here.

The message here acknowledges that there is anxiety in the human condition. We will be anxious. But perhaps when we examine the events and issues that fill our lives with anxiety, we might consider that the common factor is that in those times we have separated ourselves from God.

We might feel that God has abandoned us. Through busyness or for a million other reasons, we might have abandoned God, or at least neglected our time with God, such that our relationship is struggling.

Perhaps it's that we have chosen to disconnect from our Christian values, and this has given us conflicting and anxious feelings.

As we bring our lives more in sync with a loving and forgiving God, we naturally become less anxious. We know that we are not alone in this vast universe; we are part of a cosmic adventure, and thus our lives have value, purpose, and are meant to be.

This passage tells us to "**Be dressed for action:** I love this. Be ready. Be ready to go with God. An adventure with God can't be anything but amazing.

Lastly, **Be ready, for the Son of Man:** The Son of Man, the one sent to show us the way. One cannot go wrong hanging out with Jesus. Yes, the journey might get a little bumpy. One might have to stand against a tide of intolerance, greed, and many other unpleasant human behaviors.

And this is where we circle back to the message of the first lesson: "Do not be afraid, little flock, for it is your Father's good pleasure to give you the kingdom." God is with us always, championing our loving hearts."

In our times of anxiety, God gives us presence, and God gives us scripture. In our anxiety, scripture gives us wisdom, lets us know that there is nothing new under the sun.

God has seen it all before. It is our choice to live a life of Hope or one of despair and anxiety.

To be called to prepare for God is to choose to direct our hearts towards Hope. It is **in** Hopee where we find genuine and everlasting peace.

Amen