

Luke 12:32-40

32 “Do not be afraid, little flock, for it is your Father’s good pleasure to give you the kingdom. 33 Sell your possessions and give alms. Make purses for yourselves that do not wear out, an unfailing treasure in heaven, where no thief comes near and no moth destroys. 34 For where your treasure is, there your heart will be also.

35 “Be dressed for action and have your lamps lit; 36 be like those who are waiting for their master to return from the wedding banquet, so that they may open the door for him as soon as he comes and knocks. 37 Blessed are those slaves whom the master finds alert when he comes; truly I tell you, he will fasten his belt and have them sit down to eat, and he will come and serve them. 38 If he comes during the middle of the night or near dawn and finds them so, blessed are those slaves.

39 “But know this: if the owner of the house had known at what hour the thief was coming, he[a] would not have let his house be broken into. 40 You also must be ready, for the Son of Man is coming at an hour you do not expect.”

The gospel of the Lord. Praise to you, O Christ.

Grace to you and peace, from God our Creator and our Lord Jesus Christ. Amen.

I'm here with you this morning, or afternoon, or evening... honestly, after a week at the Churchwide Assembly, I'm not sure what day it is, let alone what time! By the end, caffeine had lost its kick. It was a blessed exhaustion that is beyond explanation.

We gather now to hear the Word of God that revives and sustains us. But today, our gathering has a particular resonance, as we look back on

the work of our Churchwide Assembly, which concluded just a few days ago in Phoenix. This was a time of significant change and deep discernment for our church, and it's a fitting moment to reflect on how God's Word speaks to us in the aftermath of such an important gathering.

Our lectionary readings this morning, Luke 12:32-40 and Hebrews 11:1-3, provide us with a beautiful and challenging lens through which to view the work we have done.

First, from Luke 12, Jesus' words to his disciples: "Do not be afraid, little flock, for it is your Father's good pleasure to give you the kingdom." This passage reminds us of our identity as the church. We are the "little flock." At the Churchwide Assembly, we made significant decisions, elected new leaders, and adopted new policies. We elected Bishop Curry from Metro Chicago as our new presiding bishop and Pastor "CeCee" Mills as our new secretary—two powerful elections that are a testament to our

church's commitment to new leadership and new voices.

We adopted a new social statement on faith and civic life, and we approved changes to our constitution and bylaws. We wrestled with complex issues, including a memorial on Palestine, and we voted on a budget that will guide our work for the next three years.

There was space for speaking boldly about our wounds, offering forgiveness, and looking for a path of healing. All emotions were present in the week of work done at the Churchwide Assembly.

In the midst of all of this, it can be easy to get caught up in the details, the debates, the wins and the losses. We can become anxious about the future. Will these decisions be the right ones? Will our church thrive? Will we be able to meet the challenges that lie ahead?

Jesus' words are a powerful anchor for us in these questions. He reminds us that our primary identity is not in our budget, our polity, or even our resolutions. We are the "little flock," and our

hope is not in our own wisdom or strength, but in God's good pleasure. The kingdom of God is not something we build, but a gift we receive. This is a profound and humbling truth. It frees us from the anxiety of trying to "save" the church on our own and calls us to trust in the God who has already given us the kingdom.

This brings us to our second passage, from Hebrews 11: "Now faith is the assurance of things hoped for, the conviction of things not seen." The Churchwide Assembly was, in many ways, an act of faith. We were making decisions for a future we cannot fully see. We voted to amend our social statement on human sexuality to be more inclusive and to align with current law. We wrestled with language in a memorial on Palestine, seeking a path that upholds our historic positions while also speaking with prophetic voice. We acted on recommendations from the Commission for a Renewed Lutheran Church, seeking to dismantle racism and create a more just and equitable church.

These were not easy decisions. They required us to have faith—the assurance of things hoped for. We hope for a church that is more just, more inclusive, and more prophetic. We hope for a world that knows peace, reconciliation, and an end to violence. We don't see this world in its fullness yet. There is still so much work to do, so much brokenness to mend. But our votes, our debates, our communal discernment—these were all acts of conviction in things not seen. They were expressions of our belief that God is at work in our world, and that we, the church, are called to be God's hands and feet in that work.

The work of the Churchwide Assembly is not the end of the story. It is a beginning. It is a new chapter in the life of our church, led by new leaders, and guided by new resolutions. But through all the change, the words of Jesus remain the same: "Do not be afraid, little flock." Our faith is not in the outcome of an assembly, but in the God who is at work in the world and in our church.

I have to put this in your minds now, to plant seeds: if you have not attended a synod assembly, consider making space in your schedule to be a voting member from your congregation. If you want to be even bolder, consider being a voting member from our synod to the 2028 Churchwide Assembly. That's in Des Moines, Iowa, so not as hot as Phoenix, at least I hope, and for Dakotans, a 12hr drive from Bismarck almost means we wouldn't even consider flying, right!

Seriously thought, the church needs each and every one of us, no matter how unequipped we feel when considering a leadership position, teaching, leading on council, or starting some new way to share God's love with the world. We are not ready, we don't have the skills or experience, and we are definitely not experts. What we are, without question, are God's beloved children, called to be church for the sake of the world.

And by God's grace, we are freed to go from this place, not with anxiety about the future, but with

the peace of Christ. Let us go with the assurance of things hoped for and the conviction of things not seen, trusting that God's good pleasure is to give us the kingdom. And let us, as the "little flock," be a living testament to that faith, for the life of the world as it is today, and as we imagine it can be in the future.

Let us pray. Creator God, send your Holy Spirit to fill our hearts with a love for all creation, a love for peace, and a love for service in the world for the sake of Christ, who lived and died and lives again, who brings his light to give us life, and who leads us by his example. Stir in us an undeniable urge to shine our light into the darkness that surrounds our neighbors near and far. Continue to call us, your church, to love in a way that allows your will to be done on earth as it is in heaven.

Let all God's people boldly say, "Amen. Come Holy Spirit!"