

Sermon “God’s Unexpected Kingdom
Kirk of St James
Sunday August 10, 2025
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I underestimated how much of my time as a parent would be spent negotiating—whether I want to or not! A favorite recently around our house is the argument “That was dessert, it was not a bed snack.” It has also happened in reverse, where yes, they did get a snack before bed, but they didn’t get dessert. More time outside to play, one more episode, reasons why they could not possibly pick up right now, a little more time at the beach—always trying to get the best deal possible, and I blame their father! Chad also loves to get the best deal possible, to the extent that at yard sales, or markets where dickering is expected I just pretend I don’t know him. I can’t fully lay the blame with Chad, in a world where it feels like systems take advantage of us, and monopolies continue to grow, we want to try and find the best deals, and the best prices, we shop around to make sure we are not being taken for a ride. With the price of groceries and the realities of shrinkflation I compare supermarket prices every week, trying to figure out where the best deals are. In a world where we try to be fiscally responsible, and we feel the bite of inflation our natural inclination is to hold on a little more tightly, so coming to the passage in Luke today is a struggle for us modern listeners.

We live in a world that runs on anxiety. We often feel like we do not have enough resources, that some things are simply out of reach, time is in short supply, and there is too much to do. We feel stretched at home, at work, and in the world. As one person said, “This world thrives on people setting higher and higher goals for themselves, and each other, so that they can worry all day and all year about whether they will reach them. If they do, they will set new ones. If they don’t, they will feel they’ve failed. Was this really

how we were supposed to live?” It is not difficult to get to a point where we are worrying about worrying! Social media is very adept at exploiting and inflaming issues and fears. Yet despite all of the anxiety, and worry and questions, God’s word to us today speaks a different message into our lives. It suggests a reordering and a prioritizing that pushes back fear and offers abundance.

“Do not be afraid little flock, for it is your Father’s good pleasure to give you the kingdom.” This is not an empty promise but rather a statement spoken into our lives that is full of hope. Even when we feel we have come to the end our resources and our abilities, the promises of God’s kingdom go beyond what we can comprehend. It encourages us to loosen our grip on what we think, and step more into the trust of what God can do. “As with so much of his teaching, what Jesus says here goes to the heart of the way we are. To inhale a bracing lungful of his good sense is health-giving at every level. But his warnings and commands go deeper as well, down to the roots of the problem he faced in confronting his contemporaries with the message of God’s kingdom. This wasn’t simply good advice on how to live a happy, carefree life. This was a challenge to the very centre of his world.” Jesus was speaking to people who did not have infinite resources. In fact, they might have a change of clothes or two and not much more. They knew they could be one disaster away from being destitute. The same could likely be said of many of us today. My friend’s mom is a social worker, and she often said most families are one missed paycheck away from disaster.

When we come to a passage like Luke this morning, we have several points of contention converging together. There is our responsibility to be good stewards of what we have been given. There is the reality that if you do not try to at least plan, and organize that problems will arise, and perhaps even overwhelm us (or a church). There is the reality that

we cannot live lives that are constantly hypervigilant—after all, even today in the military and onboard boats among other things being on watch is shared. Then you put that up against God’s word to trust and let go, it can be difficult to know how to proceed. How do we live faithfully, responsibly, and in a way that is both trusting of God’s promises and also good stewardship.

As Jesus reminds us, first of all is remembering that all of life is a gift from God that has been freely given. There is nothing we do to earn that. The second is remembering what abundance looks like in the Kingdom of God. It might not be large reserve funds to have stored away, but it can be sitting down to share a sandwich with an unhoused person. There has been an interesting trend on social media the last few months, and it is often posted with one of two taglines, “This is what rich looks like to me” or “this is what my peace looks like.” The pictures are of things like sunsets, a beloved pet, children playing outside, a book and a mug of tea, or even a garden. A movement like this pushes against the idea that richness in life is tied to clothing, name brands, large homes, cars, or anything else the world is trying to sell us. In some ways I find this a helpful example of what trusting in God, looks like in today’s world. Stop worrying, stop pushing, stop grinding, and see the gifts that are in front of us and how we might share them. It encourages us to slow down our pace, and to find value in something different.

Even within the church there have been times when Christians have equated busyness with Godliness, or grandeur with faith. At no point in time did Jesus ever command that we, “stay busy.” Sometimes we fill our church lives with projects and programs, losing sight of why we do it. I sat through two interesting meetings over the last couple of weeks. Neither meeting was one where I could write down an agenda that we could follow and move through point by point. Rather, they were places where

conversation needed to happen. One was a church I was asked to visit as part of my Presbytery duties. It was an honest and heartfelt discussion and struggle over the church and what they do, and why they do it. The other was a meeting with our session here on New Beginnings. As we talk and discuss there is a longing to make sure we are engaging in our community and trying to balance not biting off more than we chew, thereby stretching us so thin we start to fray. I really didn't know where the conversation was going to go, but as I was packing up to go home, I thought that was fun. There were ideas I had never considered, and meaningful conversation, and a longing to do what we felt called to do. We are going back out into the community to discuss with folks the needs that are there to make sure we are engaging with the needs that exist. At the end of the day, we step out in faith and see what happens. Some things might work, some things might not, but at least we have the faith and the hope to try.

Within God's kingdom anything is possible. In the scripture this morning, the master returns from the banquet and ends up serving a meal to the servants. The master's return is not meant to chide or judge them, but rather to offer a gift. We work alongside of each other in the church, we do our best to listen to God's call and to engage in the needs of the world around us. The image this morning reminds us God's kingdom is not only about the biggest programs, or the grandest churches, those things are fine. However, it is also about where two or three are gathered in faith. It is about a sandwich shared with someone who is hungry. It is about all those little acts of faith we do on a daily basis. In a world that would have us feeling stretched thin and inadequate, God's word comes in a different way. Find the beauty around you, catch your breath, and live your faith as best you can. Perhaps an underwhelming message at first glance—but it is the one that will give us life.