

## **“Living With Uncertainty (Luke 12:32-40) 08/07/10**

### **Introduction**

Fears, we all need to deal with them and if not they exert powerful influences over our lives. Some fears are healthy, **“I am afraid to jump from this high bridge”**. But many others have detrimental effects on our lives. They can paralyze us, rob us of any real freedom of action or pre-dispose us to make poor decisions. But fears can be controlled and even dispelled. **“Do not be afraid”**, Jesus tells his disciples in the Gospel passage this morning. Jesus never told his disciple to do something which was beyond their ability. He wanted them (and us) to re-focus priorities. The disciples fears about the future were causing them to hang on what little they had, rather than generously sharing with others.- a very common situation! Our fears of scarcity-**“well I may have enough now, but I am uncertain or afraid about the future”**, often cause us to be tight-fisted, unable to be free and generous with what we have.

Some years ago my daughter was helping her grandmother clear out her home, prior to her moving into assisted living. Susannah climbed into the storage attic and found huge quantities of old junk-Grandma being a serious pack rat! In the growing throw away pile she placed a very old (40+ years) pair of her Grandpa's skates which hadn't been used for decades, (Grandpa had died almost 10 years earlier). **“Oh Susannah, don't throw these away, I might use them”** said Grandma. When I heard this story I smiled to myself, imagining an 88 year old Grandma donning her husband's antique skates, several sizes too large for her at the local hockey rink! Not going to happen however much Geritol she might be taking .

Parker Palmer says **“The irony, often tragic, is that in embracing the scarcity assumption, we create the very scarcities we fear..... We create scarcity by fearfully accepting it as law and by competing with others for resources as if we were stranded in the Sahara at the last oasis”**.

The **only** way to deal successfully with fears is to admit to having them and ask ourselves why do they have such power over us? My fears of loud machinery in dark places Denial, saying **“that is not a problem for me”** only increases the power of our fears. Only in my later years have I asked **myself 'what is that all about?'** I discovered this went back to my early childhood-15 weeks in an Isolation hospital. If we ignore or deny them, they go deep inside and act as puppeteers pulling the strings, controlling our conduct. I have a friend who had a paralyzing fear of spiders. Rather than confronting the fear and getting help to deal with it she "managed" it - at the first sight of a spider she would run away. However one day while she was driving her car, a spider started to crawl across her wind-shield. She crashed her car and that acted as a wake-up call, especially

as she had to explain, both to the police and her insurance agent, what caused her to crash. She then got the necessary help to deal with her phobia.

Jesus tells his disciples (and by extension us) not to allow our fears to control our lives-specifically fears about having a lack of material things. This is a very pertinent word for us, given the economic difficulties of the last couple of years. But unlike us, many of Jesus first hearers had only just had enough to live on and they lived with the constant prospect that overnight they would not even have that. One disaster-an injury to the family breadwinner for example often meant instant destitution. Yet Jesus calls them as he calls us to live as liberated citizens of The Kingdom of God. failure to do so Jesus warns will enslave us to material things-they will become "our treasure - that which is most precious and important and yet at the same time causes us the most anxiety.

Do not misunderstand we are not called to a self help program-but to embrace fully our God as Ruler of all and so to live in his Kingdom. Israel, in Jesus day had become like the Rich Fool of last week's parable -seeing possessions as the key to security. In contrast the Kingdom of God is, at its heart, about God as sovereign sweeping the world with love and power. We are invited to relax in the fact that the God who made us and loves us is in complete control of the world, our lives and our destinies.. Thus real security is in Him not in things. Again do not misunderstand, being a citizen of God's Kingdom does not mean that we never know hardship, challenge or even pain in this life. But what it does mean is that God is with us at every moment of our lives, He is in control of this world and whatever circumstances may come our way. This security available to all citizens of God's Kingdom stands in stark contrast to the uncertain and ephemeral 'security' actually delivered by things.

We have an unfailling treasure says Jesus. It is not subject to the uncertainties of the stock market, can't be stolen, will never spoil, corrode or otherwise be lost. This treasure transcends even death. It is not true when people say of death **"you can't take it with you"**. You certainly can't take material things with you. But our unfailling treasure goes with us.. What is this treasure?

Our Generous deeds  
Freedom from anxiety  
The joys we experienced by caring for others  
Growth in our characters, transforming us into more loving,  
forgiving and caring people.

We do not work or struggle to produce these treasures; they are the result, the fruit in us of Kingdom Life. I want to suggest that when we pray the Lord's Prayer this morning, that as we ask that God's " Kingdom to come on Earth ", that we invite God to come and fully rule in our lives-for his Kingdom to reign in us.

Sometimes people think of Jesus as an 'other- worldly type', focusing only on "spiritual things"; that his teaching is hopelessly idealistic and impracticable for the "real world". Nothing could be more false. Jesus teaching is extremely practical- he is concerned how we live in this world, how we treat others, what we trust in for our security and how we use our money and material possessions; these are all major emphases in the teaching of Jesus. Why? Because Jesus knows that our wallets and check- books are a much better indicator of the priority of God and his kingdom in our lives, than are our hymn books, prayer books or even Bibles. Like it or not, the choices we make about generosity and sharing our material things, including our money most accurately measure our spiritual health. ***"Where your treasure is, there will your heart be also"*** says Jesus.

