

His Gospel Is Peace Series
Sermon – Third Sunday in Advent 2024

No Fear of Lack

“Do not be afraid, little flock, for your Father has been pleased to give you the kingdom.”

Luke 12:32

What will it be this year? Which gadget or toy will become the “must-have-yet-impossible-to-acquire” item of the holiday shopping season? It’s always something.

Previous generations had Cabbage Patch fever. There was the Tickle Me Elmo craze of the mid-90’s. And in recent years, it’s been all about technology, with parents scrambling for the latest phone for their teen or a third Nintendo Switch for the house—you know, so that each kid can have their own.

Without fail, each year, there are some must-have items that become symbols of sorts. The toys, the tech, whatever it is, become signifiers of something greater. For a child, to actually receive one of the “must-have” items as a Christmas gift is a emblem that the kid shows proudly. It means you are a truly blessed child. And if you’re a parent who manages somehow to get your hands on and buy one of these must-have items, then you get a badge of honor because it means you are an exceptional, if not extravagant, parent.

Under the surface of the annual scramble for the right gift, beneath the wishing and dreaming for that one perfect present, is a fear. It’s a fear we carry with us year round, not just at the holidays. It’s a **fear of going without**. It’s the fear of me, or someone I care about, lacking something essential to our well-being. It’s not a fear that is unique to the holidays. We actually have this fear all year long. But now, at Christmastime, we place an odd sort of spotlight

on this fear, sprinkling it with cinnamon and nutmeg, wrapping it with a bow, and placing it under a tree.

The fear of not having enough is always in front of us. In fact the fear of not have everything you need is with us right now. I'd be willing to bet that you have a list going right now of the food, the clothes, the gifts, you need to grab in order for this Christmas to be okay. Some of you may have been tending to that list during this sermon, opening the Notes app on your phone and jotting down a couple items just in the last few minutes. You gotta remember to get those things, "or else!," we think. It's never not on our minds.

And we aren't alone. Jesus' disciples were the same way as we are. And so, standing in front of His disciples Jesus gave them a command, ***"Do not be anxious about your life"*** *Luke 12:22*. It stands to reason that Jesus needed to say this because among the disciples there was a lot of hand wringing and worry about whether or not their needs and wants would be met.

For the disciples, it could be that this fear was fanned into flame by their following Jesus. Their life was getting a bit crazy as crowds of thousands gathered wherever they went. There was growing tension with the Jewish authorities, and Jesus' recent miracles moved people to the realization that Jesus was not just a wonder-working rabbi with incredible charisma. No, Jesus was indeed divine; He was God come down in human flesh-and-bone. The disciples found themselves attached to something, to Someone, much bigger than they could have ever anticipated. And I would imagine that they must have wondered, "With all of this hubbub and confusion, Are my needs an afterthought in all of this? Am I going to be okay, if I stay attached and involved in this miraculous, amazing, confusing Jesus-movement?" With all God is involved in, are MY needs going to be overlooked?

Perhaps you've wondered the same. Are YOUR needs going to be met? It's not that you doubt that Jesus has your best interest in mind on a grand scale—forgiveness, eternity, and all of that. But let's be honest, have you ever worried if, in the course of earning and offering to us the BIG things, He might overlook or undervalue the little things? Have you thought, **“I know Jesus has saved my life in the end, but will I lack what I need to live my life today?”**

To this concern Jesus clearly says to you today, **“Do not be anxious about your life.”** But He doesn't stop there. He does MORE than command us not to be afraid. Jesus doesn't overlook your fear – He knows everything inside you. He knows it all. AND Jesus doesn't just tell you to “deal with” your worrying heart all by yourself; to “Buck up!,” “Grit your teeth and bear it,” or “Put on your Big Boy pants.” That response from Jesus would just be an empty, heartless command because it's impossible sinful, weak people like us to just fix ourselves.

Instead, Jesus offers a word of comfort. He hands a couple of truly incredible promises to us, and He gives comforts and promises that accomplish what He has commanded. He quiets our anxieties. He silences your fear of lack with the power of His own Word.

So, what is that Word? He said: **“Do not be afraid, little flock, for your Father has been pleased to give you the kingdom.”** *Luke 12:32*
He clearly promises you (1) The Father knows your needs (*Luke 12:30*), and (2) He is giving you the kingdom (*Luke 12:32*).

Think for a moment about your day-to-day needs. The list is long, the details are mundane. It includes everything from breath in your lungs to gluten free cereal for breakfast. And now consider what Christ is saying, “God the Father knows these needs.” The Father, in His indescribable glory and His unmatched might, is aware of your need for antihistamines in the spring, a snack before

bedtime, and a jolt of caffeine at just about all times. God knows you need these things!

But there's more. Not only is He aware, down to the detail, of what you need, He's offering something even greater to us, His children. ***"The Father has been pleased,"*** Jesus says, ***"to give to you the kingdom"*** *Luke 12:32*. The kingdom!

When we hear of Jesus giving "the kingdom," our minds usually think of heaven. It's easy to dismiss these words as a reference to the promise of eternal life, to comfort that comes only after we've died. But that's not what Jesus is talking about. It's certainly not the only thing Jesus is talking about. God's kingdom is not so much a location as it is an event. The kingdom of God is the reign and rule of God. Jesus is promising that you and I have been given full access to the activity of God, not just tomorrow but today, here and now, even in our mundane needs.

You see, to people who belong to Jesus, He's promising **two types of provision**: God knows, down to the last detail, so He (1) promises what you need physically and emotionally in order to be okay each day. And He will provide those things. AND on top of this basic providing for you -- flowing in and over and through it all—is the otherworldly activity of God: (2) He will always provide His grace and mercy, His love and power, His peace and promises. He gives these to sustain you, empower you, and transform you now and into eternity.

- Every time you order groceries online and pick them up an hour later without having to exit your car, God is keeping His promise to know and meet your needs.

- And each time you enter the church and come to the Lord's table, being fed with forgiveness and given strength by God's Spirit, God is keeping His promise and offering the kingdom.

- Whenever you pull on your favorite shirt that fits just right and slide on the shoes that sit next to the door, God is keeping His promise to know and meet your most basic needs.

- And every time you hear the message of God's mercy in Christ, proclaimed to you from the pulpit or streamed on your favorite preaching podcast, God is speaking life into you and keeping His promise to bring His kingdom to you.

- With the first sip of coffee in the morning, God is keeping that promise to know and meet your needs.

- And with every kind word or act of compassion from a follower of Jesus, God is finding you, keeping His promise, and offering you the kingdom.

In all of it, the God of the Universe is reaching down from heaven to care for you. He's making it clear that He sees you and loves you. And He's making it possible for you to actually live today just as Jesus wants you to live, without fear, and in quiet peace. His Words have the power to work in you what He commands, ***"do not be anxious."***

And this is part of what makes Advent and Christmas so wonderful to celebrate. Christmas marks the inbreaking, the start of living in complete confidence in God's extravagant provision. God's own Son has come to live with you, die for you, and rise out of your grave for you. And top of all these things, as if this wasn't enough, this same Son opens your eyes to see countless other daily essentials that God gladly gives to you. For people of who trust in Jesus, Christmas is a joy to celebrate because it means the end of ever having to wonder, "will we have enough?"

We will. We shall. We do. Why? Because we have the person and the promises of Christ!

Several years ago a movie came out called, "The Blind Side." It's popular, and on TV lots. You've probably see it. The movie tells the true story of Michael Oher. He was born in Memphis, TN. His dad was murdered and his mom a cocaine addict. He had to live on the streets in the ghetto. Michael Oher went to 11 schools in 9 years. At the age of 16, he was so far behind in learning that anybody would have guessed his future was to become a gang member.

One day Leigh Anne and Sean Tuhoy saw Michael at Briarcrest Christian School. They thought it was strange that he was at the school on Thanksgiving break. He was walking to the gym, even though he wasn't on the team. He just wanted to stay warm. The Tuhoy's took him into their home, adopted him, and made him part of their family.

One day they went into Michael's room and found a bunch of food stashed in his room. He was stashing food because he was accustomed to not knowing where his next meal was coming from.

It was so ironic because the Tuhoy's owned about 60 Taco Bell restaurants. They told him he could go into any one of their Taco Bells and get something to eat any time he wanted because he was their son. In the end, Michael learned to play football, and he was the first-round draft-pick of the Baltimore Ravens. He had a successful NFL career.

Did Michael Oher have to be afraid that he would lack? I was accustomed to that worry. He had that fear ingrained in him from his former life. But did he have to fear not having enough? No! Why? Because he was their son. He was brought into a family that owned 60 Taco Bells. The greatest gift they gave him is they made him their son. Because he was theirs, he learned he had all he needed.

You have been adopted by the most loving Being ever! God made you His. He promised from the beginning of time that He would win you back to Himself. And God did this through giving His Son, Jesus Christ for you. When Christ was born in the stable of Bethlehem, He came for you. He lived and then died to make you God's own.

Jesus said, ***“Do not be afraid, little flock, for your Father has been pleased to give you the kingdom.”*** *Luke 12:32* You have Someone watching over you. You are part of the little flock of God's own sheep. Jesus is your Good Shepherd. He leads you, tends to you. He has given His life for you. He has beaten back everything that would destroy you. You don't need to be afraid.

You have a Father who loves you. In Baptism, He has made you His child. He has taken all your sin away and granted you eternal life. He has promised that nothing can separate you from His love because of what Jesus has done for you. He takes great pleasure in lavishing all these good gifts on you. You don't need to be afraid.

You have been given the kingdom of God. This isn't only entrance into heaven. You have been given the kingdom itself. You have been given Jesus. He belongs to you, and you belong to Him. This is God's gift to the world. When this gift, this God in a human child, arrived on Christmas, then fear's rule ended.

And so, this Christmas, as you give gifts to others, whether you give them that “must have” tech item or something practical and essential like shirts and socks — do it with joy.

Give to others, not because they need it and they are fearful that they will miss out, they will lack. Your gift really can't take that fear of lack away. Instead, whatever you give is an expression of

your confidence in God's provision. God's provision is seen most clearly in the birth of His Son, the Christ child.

This Christmas, may you seek to share with others the feeling we ourselves enjoy at all times: you are seen by God who knows your needs; you are loved, and He gives daily bread (like socks and shirts), and the very Kingdom of God (the true must-have-item). You are His, so in Christ, you will never, ever go without. Amen.