

Watchfulness, Hope & Joy

a sermon preached on the

11th Sunday after Pentecost

12 August 2007

at

St Luke's in the City, Christchurch

by The Reverend Jim McKenna

deacon of St Luke's & Chaplain to Bishopspark

Lection: Luke 12:32-48

Our journey of faith, as we endeavour to follow the teaching and example of Christ, can as we all know be a road of snares and pitfalls. So Jesus encourages us not to be afraid and reminds us of God's promise of the Kingdom. If we have freed our lives from material greed then our desire will be for Kingdom and our hearts will be in the right place. He then warns us to be ready for His return and that He will come at a time when we least expect Him.

To live without watchfulness invites disaster! Thieves don't send us emails, warning us that they are coming to burgle our homes, therefore we prepare and secure our property in the best way we can. But to get this picture right we must remember that the watching of the Christian for the coming of Christ is not that of terror-stricken fear and shivering apprehension. Those who live their lives in the fear of a God of wrath, wearing expression of gloom and for-casting doom, are denying who we really are as followers of Christ, and a God of love, justice and compassion. We are to watch with eager expectation for the coming of glory and joy. The spirit, which leads to disaster, is the spirit which says there is plenty of time for spiritual preparation.

William Barclay writes of a story, which tells of three apprentice devils who were coming to earth to finish their apprenticeship. They were talking to Satan prior to their departure, about their plans to tempt and ruin men and women. The first said; "I will tell them there is no God." Satan answered; "That will not delude many, for they know there is a God." The second said; "I will tell them there is no hell." Satan said; "You will deceive no one that way, because many are already living a life of Hell." The third said; "I will tell them there is no hurry." "Go" said Satan, "and you will ruin them by the thousands." The most dangerous of delusions is that there is plenty of time. We are deceiving ourselves when we use the word "tomorrow." There are things, which must not be put off, for none of us knows, if for us, tomorrow will ever come. In the midst of warnings and self-doubt, struggling Christians today deserve a clear reminder and affirmation of their worth and usefulness in their service to God.

The Church is a community of human beings united in their endeavours to follow the teachings of Christ. As individuals we are called again and again to discover the divine image within us. As loving families we are to be the rich and special soil in which the discovery grows and then spreads outwards as we do something beautiful for God. Without the celebration of creativity, our lives of faith and service become mechanical and our imagination dies. It is time for us to use the gifts we have been graced with to glorify God and His Kingdom. There are many who feel that they must be involved in something big, something grand or jumping on the bandwagon of the current popular theme, when all God is asking from them, is to do what "HE" has called them for and do it well.

In the industrial city of Sheffield with its smoke-belching factories, children were finishing school for the day. And as they made their way to the school bus a little girl noticed the magnificent rainbow. There it was, a bow of beauty, encircling the blood-shot sky over the city. Her companions gathered round her - they missed nothing in the miracle of the ring of surprise that hung like a silent blessing over their homes and streets. Their teacher joined them. She could have said something about God or a prayer of thanks for His creation. She didn't. She knew that the still wonder of the children was already an act of adoration, there was nothing more to add. In their awed silence they were doing and being something beautiful for God.

We keep our lamps lit as we spend time in prayer. We are dressed for action, when we reach out in practical love towards those around us. Where our treasure is, there will our hearts be also. Amen.

Reference: William Barclay

j.p.mckenna@xtra.co.nz