

**Assured Faith | Luke 12:32-40; Hebrew 11: 1-4; 8-16 | LUMC | August 7, 2022
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Dear Church family and friends: Last week we reviewed Christ's instructions on how we must do business, accumulate wealth, and use our resources to care for our needs and the needs of others. Jesus CONTINUES to explain why we must 100% not put our faith in our belongings. Jesus wants us to put faith in God above all else! It is only by faith that we will see God, and faith will determine our destiny. Faith is unquestionable belief and those with that belief enter in the reign of God.

There are many ways that our path to eternity can be blocked, and most of them are earthly trappings. Jesus says it is not easy to detach ourselves from our belongings because, to some extent, our material wealth gives us identity; it defines who we are in the eyes of the community. Those who live according to their earthly gains often show earthly rewards: being proud of their belongings, disdaining those less fortunate, and determined to remain "superior" to others. However, the faithful live by eternal rules: loving others like self, feeling the pain of others, working toward mutuality and promoting equality in all spheres of their lives. They have a deep mental resolve to be Godly; they seek God and live on God's terms.

Jesus is aware of our human need to anchor our identity in perishables, our belongings. We fear the unknown, and that makes us want to control our destiny and results in our being nervous to face our troubles. We are constantly chasing the wind as our needs are endless and our fear continues to increase. Jesus says that what can erase fear is experiencing the reign of God while on earth, and continually preparing to experience eternity fully when our mortal life ends. I train myself to remain in the reign of God; my faith in God erases fear and leads me to a fearless life. Fearing the loss of our earthly identity—defined by material wealth—blocks our being in the reign of God.

The term "afraid" is used 200 times in the Bible and the term "fear" is mentioned 53 times in Psalms alone. Fear comes in different shapes and affects every area of a person's life: physical, mental, emotional and psychological.

The only beneficial fear is reverential awe of God.

Often fear is diminished by believing in God and living in the presence of God *along with* our belongs. Another earthly way of minimizing fear is buying insurance to cover our lives, autos, homes and property. The last time I checked the definition of insurance coverage, I found it is an amount of risk or liability that is covered for an individual or entity. We insure against theft, accident or natural catastrophes. Insurance reduces our fear of losing the value of our belongings to fire or accidents. We make sure the monthly premium is paid on time to avoid losing the coverage. I am sure most of you comply with insurance coverage requirements. My family makes sure our premiums are paid on time.

In the same way that we fear losing insurance coverage, we should guard our faith—the ticket to being in eternity now. Insurance policies have very strict rules to

maintain coverage. Being in God also demands that we stay focused and aware of evil schemes all around us, and avoid being misled and off the road to eternity.

Speaking to disciples about ensuring their faith, Jesus said faith in God takes away fear. It creates hope even at the thought of losing everything you treasure so dearly. Faith promotes our inner resources that make us hopeful, and assures us that after death we will live an eternal life with God.

I UNDERSTAND what it feels like to live in a world of the insured and uninsured, faithless and faithful. Being in our earthly life one can feel hopeless due to the lack of insurance. The thought of facing uncertainty throws one off balance. I have visited people who were discharged from the hospital because their insurance refused to cover their treatment. I have cried with a family of five—three kids and parents—who lost everything in a fire, and they had no property insurance coverage. The parents had lost their jobs during Covid. The family was living on public support.

People of faith are moved by empathy for the less fortunate. They become custodian, or “savior” as we say, for those unable to help themselves. Faithful people seek justice for those unable to receive justice in a corrupt society, they support widows, the elderly and the poor. People of faith share their wealth with those in need and spread their tent beyond the horizon. They do missionary work. Their hearts are restless until they will rest in God. And, God always multiply their wealth, keep them in good health and they find joy in what they do!

Abraham was among these faithful giants. When God called him, he left his inheritance and his people and moved to a foreign land where his faith in God was tested and doubted, and his prayerful practice was minimized. He was referred to as a foreigner and sojourner. He was ridiculed by the rich people of the land he moved to. He was called a pauper. At some point king used his power to separate Abraham with his wife. Abraham had no option; he was to give up his wife or get deported. Forced between the rock and hard place, Abraham had to let Sarah go. I believe you know the story. The same old politics is often used by the rich companies, people and politicians to misuse foreigners and deny them their rights.

Abraham did not waiver from faith in God. Even when he became rich, he did not allow his wealth to divert him away from his faith in God. At one point he was close to losing faith because he loved his son, Isaac more than God. When God asked him to sacrifice Isaac, Abraham realized the extent to which he had strayed from faith. Abraham repented and his son was spared.

When I am with my kids, sometimes I catch myself in the process of being entangled like Abraham. I stop quickly to reclaim God above my kids. God gave me these children and should remain my personal savior. Simple daily happenings can move one away from faith.

At the time Jesus preached against fear, his followers were few, and that is why he called them “little flock”, a flock that God desires to include in his reign. Despite being few, they strictly adhered to Christ’s teachings that promoted priceless living. They

acted like guards who stay awake waiting for their master to return home. They stayed with their faith just like a guard stays fully clothed when on guard.

On another note, Jesus sends us out to mission in the world by being friends of sinners but not their sins. We guard against being entangled in their sins. It is easy to join a sinner and become part of their lives, including the evils they live in. This is why Jesus cautions the “little flock” to identify their mission role and their human desires. God encourages us to remain vigilant as the church enters minority status in the community. The church revives when it stays on Christ’s mission and fully dispenses it without partiality. Let us remain aware of being a missionary to the faithless and avoid being drawn into faithlessness when we share human values. Jesus advises us to be aware of thieves; they break into a house when no one is around. Jesus used the term ‘thief’ to let us know those we relate with (even in our families) can mislead us from our journey of faith. Always stay on guard!

In today’s St Luke reading, Jesus confirms that he will return to the earth to separate out believers. The Son of God has taught us the way home: being faithful and living a faithful life is the way home. Eternity with God will be a better place since God rules justly. It is a place without liars, boasters or wealth-bent people. It is a place that considers everyone a family member despite their place of origin, their status, their culture, wisdom, or physical powers.

Friends, my treasure and possession (my faith) is where God is. I know I belong to God with my resources, and my family. I have committed my life to living a life of faith, to praying to a living God, to devoting my life to help others and to seek help when needed. I know that living faithfully is to practice my faith in a community of faith, join fellowships, do Bible study, support mission work and give alms to the needy. I have a strong desire to be in that “country” where God is. I am not ashamed to testify to my faith in season and out of season. I know my savior lives. I know I am not alone on this journey of faith. I know you profess God’s saving grace. I have shared much with you, and I feel honored to be among you practicing genuine and practical faith. Amen.