

Sunday, August 7, 2016

Luke 12:32-40

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Psalm 50:1-8, 22-23

¹The mighty one, God the Lord, speaks and summons the earth from the rising of the sun to its setting.

²Out of Zion, the perfection of beauty, God shines forth.

³Our God comes and does not keep silence, before him is a devouring fire, and a mighty tempest all around him.

⁴He calls to the heavens above and to the earth, that he may judge his people:

⁵“Gather to me my faithful ones, who made a covenant with me by sacrifice!”

⁶The heavens declare his righteousness, for God himself is judge. Selah

⁷“Hear, O my people, and I will speak, O Israel, I will testify against you. I am God, your God.

⁸Not for your sacrifices do I rebuke you; your burnt offerings are continually before me.

²²“Mark this, then, you who forget God, or I will tear you apart, and there will be no one to deliver.

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²³Those who bring thanksgiving as their sacrifice honor me; to those who go the right way I will show the salvation of God.”

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³²“Do not be afraid, little flock, for it is your Father’s good pleasure to give you the kingdom. ³³Sell your possessions, and give alms. Make purses for yourselves that do not wear out, an unfailing treasure in heaven, where no thief comes near and no moth destroys. ³⁴For where your treasure is, there your heart will be also. ³⁵“Be dressed for action and have your lamps lit; ³⁶be like those who are waiting for their master to return from the wedding banquet, so that they may open the door for him as soon as he comes and knocks.

³⁷Blessed are those slaves whom the master finds alert when he comes; truly I tell you, he will fasten his belt and have them sit down to eat, and he will come and serve them. ³⁸If he comes during the middle of the night, or near dawn, and finds them so, blessed are those slaves. ³⁹“But know this: if

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the owner of the house had known at what hour the thief was coming, he would not have let his house be broken into.

⁴⁰You also must be ready, for the Son of Man is coming at an unexpected hour.”

What is it that you intensely desire? For John Wood, he desired challenge and wealth. At the the age of 35 he was head of the entire Microsoft organization in the Orient. All the sales to China and Japan, Vietnam and Thailand ran through John. But he was getting a little burned out, tired of the daily pressure to produce and the long hours his career demanded. So, he took a break from work. For eighteen days he trekked through Nepal, climbing some of the highest passes in the world. Going from village to village. While he did see some of the most beautiful vistas in the world, he also saw some of the worst poverty. Village after village he visited schools, only to discover that if there was even a

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school building, there were no libraries - no books. None. None in the school and none in the people's homes.

Like all of us, Mr. Wood wanted to leave his mark on the world. It wasn't enough for him to work for one of the largest most innovative companies in the world - a company that was already changing the world. He wanted to make a real difference. So when one of the teachers in one of the schools said to him, "Maybe someday you'll come back with books," John heard his calling. And that is exactly what he has done. He left Microsoft, formed a non-profit, right as the stock market tumbled and the Twin Towers collapsed. Not a good time to do fund raising. But John intensely desired to provide books to children who could not read, not because they were incapable, but because books were unavailable. Twenty some years later and thousand of villages around the world have libraries in their schools because John Wood intensely desired to change the world.

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Where your treasure is, there will your heart be also.

What is it that you intensely desire?

I like the phrase intensely desire when thinking about treasure. Too, often, when we hear the word treasure, we think of something mystical, like a pirate's treasure chest or a lamp with a Genie. But the word's much more basic, more real than a buried treasure. All of us have desires, things for which we long, ministries we care about, people we love.

But I'll bet most of us would have trouble telling the person next to us in the pew, what it is that we intensely desire.

What we would quit our job to do, what it is that would bring us the purest joy. I think there are very few of us who really know exactly what it is that we treasure.

I wonder, is it really realistic - really fair - to even talk this way, to pose the question in such a way that it requires a complete life change to accomplish or achieve or attain that

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which you intensely desire? Can any of us really do that - change our lives, quit our jobs to chase our fondest dream?

Eleven year old Kaylee Hooley was shown a video by her dad, about making homeless people smile. She thought it was a cool thing to do - something that she could do - wanted to do. So with her dad's help, Kaylee began to collect toiletries and clothes, water and food. Then she would hold a street event where she handed out the things that she had collected. And she made her own videos of how these events helped bring a smile to the face of the homeless. Her videos went viral, so viral that she was able to form a nonprofit called ReKindle to help her take what she was doing in Phoenix and expand it around the country.

Where your treasure is, there will your heart be also.

To demonstrate what such intense desire looks like and effects, Jesus told a parable. Once upon a time, there was a

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beloved individual who went off and got married, leaving his servants in charge. The servants, wanting to celebrate their master's good fortune, stayed awake all through the night, watching for their master's return. When he does come home, they are there to greet him, as if they had planned a surprise party in his honor. So moved was the man by his servants' desire to please him, that he switched roles, becoming their servant, throwing them a party instead.

There are others we could mention. Big names, names we all recognize, whose treasure changed the world:

Dr. Martin Luther King, Jr., - leader of the non-violent civil rights movement.

Nelson Mandela - Campaigned for justice and freedom in his South Africa.

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Hellen Keller - Despite disability of both deafness and blindness, she learned to read and write, becoming a champion of social issues and helping to improve the welfare of deaf people.

Mother Teresa - Her devotion and compassion inspired the lives of many thousands she came into contact with.

Anne Frank - just an ordinary teenage girl, but she became a symbol of how ordinary people can get caught up in our inhumanity.

Where your treasure is, there will your heart be also.

A church is many things. It's a building where people gather for worship, study and fellowship. It's a group of people who share a common faith and desire to serve in Christ's name. It's a place to bring children and grand children,

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where they will hear the stories of faith and learn to care for one another.

But I like to think of the church as a dream factory - a place where ordinary people like you and me, discover our most intense desires, and are freed and empowered to live out those dreams. Where stumbling blocks are turned into building blocks and can't do's are turned into can do's.

Where the power of faith and the support of friends makes dream catching possible. A church is the one place in this cynical world, where optimism reigns, where persons are free to dream big dreams without fear of being laughed at.

Now a big dream may be as small as helping one homeless person to smile, but isn't it a dream worth sharing? It may be as small as helping one child to read, but isn't that worth doing? It may be as small as getting a moslem, a jew, a christian and an atheist together to talk about how what they believe impacts the way they live? It may be holding a

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summer music camp or a thanksgiving dinner for the community? What is it that you desire intensely? What is your treasure? Where is your heart?

The Olympics have changed over the years. What was once an event for amateurs has become a haven for professionals. But I still think the Olympic Spirit, the intense desire to compete, to represent one's country, to be an Olympian is still there. I think there are ordinary people, doing extraordinary things. Doing them not just because they have great talent - and they do - but doing them because to compete at the highest level in the sport they love is their heart's most intense desire.

Doesn't the church have a Holy Spirit empowering it's people to greatness? Wouldn't it be wonderful if each member lived with the kind of spiritual dedication it takes to compete in the Olympics? Totally committed to the one

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thing, the only thing that brings them joy - that they treasure.
that they intently desire?

So, what it is that you intensely desire?

For where your treasure is, there will your heart be also.