

August 7, 2022 Pentecost 9C
Luke 12:22-34
Transformed Vision

But seek his kingdom, and these things will be given to you as well. "Do not be afraid, little flock, for your Father has been pleased to give you the kingdom. Sell your possessions and give to the poor. Provide purses for yourselves that will not wear out, a treasure in heaven that will never fail, where no thief comes near and no moth destroys. For where your treasure is, there your heart will be also. Luke 12:31-34

Dr. Spencer Johnson is the best-selling author who wrote *Who Moved My Cheese*. He also wrote another book, not quite as popular, called *The Present*. *The Present* is a story of a little boy and an old man who form a life-long relationship. The little boy is riding his bicycle, the old man is sitting in a swing on a front porch, and his very countenance attracts the little boy's attention.

The little boy sees the old man, and he turns his bicycle around after two or three days of the old man smiling and greeting him. He says, "Old man, why are you so happy?"

And the old man smiles and says, "It's because I have the present."

"Wow!" said the little boy. "I love presents. Christmas presents. Birthday presents. All kinds of presents. Any time. How can I get this present?"

"Well, you really already have it."

"I already have it?" said the little boy. "I don't have any presents."

"Yes, you already have it. But once you can the presents, everything else falls into perspective."

And the little boy grows to be a teenager; and as a teenager, the old man and the little boy have becomes friends. He's watched him play baseball. He's watched him on his football team. And as a teenager, the young man asks this: "Old man, what about this present you have always talked about?"

"The present is the greatest gift you can ever have."

"But I want this present. I want you to give me this present."

"I can't give you the present. You have the present all by yourself, and once you have the present, everything else falls into perspective."

"Well, is it like a magic wand where you wave your hand, and everything just comes out magic, special?"

"No, it's not like a magic wand. The present is magical though, because once you get it everything else falls into perspective."

"Well, is it like a magic carpet that you ride on and you can get anywhere you want to go and do anything you want to do?"

"No, it's not like that at all. But once you have the present, you're content to be right where you are."

And the young man becomes a working man, graduating from college, and goes back to that old man with the--present.

"I think I finally got it. The present is right now, right? It's not a gift or anything."

And this man said, "Yes, you're right. It's right now. It's enjoying the moment now. It's being real now. It's authentic now. It's being in the present."

"Well, now I can go back to my job, because things really weren't working out well."

And he returned to his work. He came back a few years later and said, "You know, I'm just at a plateau. Nothing is happening, and I'm doing the present. I'm living the present."

The old man said, "Yes, but you have forgotten to profit from your mistakes of the past. Only when you do that can you really live the present at its best."

So he went back and practiced, and he remembered his mistakes, and he lived in this present, and after a few more years--he was married, he had children--he came back, he said, "I can't even get a promotion. I'm doing great work. They recognize it, but I can't get a promotion."

The old man said, "You're doing everything right. You have the present. You're enjoying the present. You're even profiting from the mistakes of your past, but you don't have a plan for your future. You need a purpose and a meaning. Write it down, think about it, and work everyday to make your plan come true."

So the man went back to work, and all of a sudden, his whole future changed, because he had a purpose and a meaning. And as would happen, the old man died, and now the middle-aged man returned to the funeral to discover that from the wealthiest to the poorest, everyone was in attendance at the funeral. The old man had befriended lots of people along the way. He had shared the successes of his life, which had been very successful in business, with how to live and how other people ought to live, boys and girls, children, old people, even the mayor of the town.

And after the funeral, the man went back to the old man's house, which now was vacant, the swing still sitting where it sat, and he sat in the swing and began to swing back and forth, and thought, "Wow, that man's life was so purposeful; it was so meaningful."

Down the street, the neighborhood had changed, but a new family had moved in with a little six-year old girl, and she was on her tricycle, and she was riding by. And as she road by, she looked up at the man sitting in the swing, and she said, "Wow! Old man."

He turned and looked and said, "Yes?"

She said, "You look so happy! Why are you so happy?"

And he said, "Oh golly, it's because I have the present."

"Wow!" she said. "I love presents. Christmas presents and birthday presents and all kinds of presents. Can you help me get that present?"

There is a truth in this story for all of us who live in the Kingdom of God. The present well-lived, profiting from the mistakes of our past and with a purposeful future that we're able to strive for the kingdom of God. God knows our needs before we ever ask him. God hears our wants. When our wants are shaped into God's will, then we begin to think about our future in the kingdom.

How much time do we spend worrying about things that never happen? How much energy do we spend correcting our children so that their behavior will be noticed and affirmed by others?

In a world where children are abused and deserted, does it really matter what name brand of clothes we wear? In a world many times where people don't even know the people next door or down the street, is it important what those think about the vehicles that we drive? In a world where hurt is real and not being accepted by one's peer group poisons our children's self image, does it really matter if we are exhibiting the newest trends? In a world where other people influence our children more than we do, shouldn't we strengthen our family by being a part of the kingdom of God? Maybe we need to notice the world right outside our door, or inside our house, and not try to imitate the actions of the world. After all, Jesus reminds us, "Strive first his Kingdom of God and his righteousness and all these things will be given to you."

Not to worry then about tomorrow for tomorrow will always bring worries of its own. Today's struggle is enough for today and today well-lived is what God wants us all to do.