

From The Pastor

In light of today's readings, we might rightly pose the question: what are you doing to prepare for your death and Resurrection? It seems like a heavy question in the lazy days of summer, yet as finite creatures, this reality is always before us. As a people of faith, our lives are focused on the life that will follow the life we have here and now.

As St. Paul so richly reflects in the second reading, 'faith is the realization of things hoped for and the evidence of things not yet seen'. Faith serves many components of our lives. It calls us to a stance of trust in a troubled world with the secure hope of heaven. Faith challenges us to relationships of love and self-giving which nourish our lives with meaning and purpose. These relationships of love become our legacy and our path to eternal life.

Faith draws us beyond an earth bound view that inspires hope for the life to come in heaven. For all the beauty and constancy of this world, our true home is with the fullness of God. Laws of science and physics, although tested and confirmed by empirical knowledge carry a dimension of faith. Being able to trust the consistency of natural laws gives us a necessary security that life, to a certain degree can be predictable, and constant.

Although we anticipate the predictability and constancy of life, we are all quite aware of how life can take very unexpected turns. We are not in control and cannot ultimately secure our life or length of day. Last Sunday, we read about the good fortune of a rich man and his abundant harvest who built bigger barns to store and secure his many goods. It was not in his awareness, and certainly not in his plans, that his life would soon be required of him that very night. Death will have its day with each of us, whether we are fully prepared or caught completely off guard.

Our faith in the death and Resurrection of Jesus secures us in the hope of life with God both here and here after. Mature faith and active prayer secures us in the embrace of God's presence now and later. Active, attentive, dynamic relationship with God is the call to be prepared to know and meet God in the day-to-day movements of life. This is the point Jesus makes in the gospel. This is not a stance of fear, but one of confident hope and promise in the love of God experienced in Jesus. This love is ever-present.

Like any meaningful relationship, faith calls us to plan and prepare for a life with God. Last week we praised the rich farmer for his hard work and the abundant reward of a good harvest. Sadly, his vision of life was only on his goods and their perceived security. He was completely negligent in even acknowledging God. Secure in worldly goods, he was blind to the good of heaven and life with God. His spiritual house was not in order and he was caught completely off guard.

Today's gospel is much the same message with a different image. It calls for a clear and certain preparedness for the day of God's coming. In the opening verse, Jesus blesses the disciples, and us, with words of great consolation. 'Do not fear any longer little ones, for your Father is pleased to give you the Kingdom'. God wants rich and abundant life for all of us. To gain this abundance is to be secure in an active relationship with God today.

Most of us show careful concern for our financial well-being. We attend to our investments with an eye to future needs, as well as those unexpected expenses that inevitably arise. With all prudence, we give careful preparation to our financial health. This is prudent and necessary planning for a reasonably secure and happy future. It stirs hope and faith for the future.

The question arises as to whether or not we are as mindful of our spiritual investments. Today's parable calls for a prepared readiness to welcome the Master on his return. Notice that there is no schedule or suggested time as to when the Master will arrive. God is always present and available. Idle is the faith that waits for a special moment or time of crisis.

Would you want to know when the Lord plans to call you home? Would you change the pace or attitude of your life if the Lord informed you as to your final days? Wisely, God does not often reveal the day or the hour of his coming. The point is that we are to always be ready to meet and receive the Lord.

How do I prepare for heaven? 'Eternal life is this, to believe in the One whom I have sent'. Believe in Jesus and know the Jesus you believe in. Let Jesus know you. Have a confident and honest relationship with God. Live with Jesus, serving his Kingdom of justice, love, and peace. Live for love, value relationships over things, share what you have, be compassionate and patient with those on your path. Be aware that your life is not your own. You belong to God and your life is God's gift to you, but not for you alone. Your life is to touch the lives of others with love. We all help each other to get to heaven. The challenge and the call is to be prepared. Let us keep our eyes fixed on Jesus and all he promises us. Stand in hope, secure in faith, active in love. Enjoy the precious life God has given you here, mindful that life in this world is only a preparation for the things of heaven.

Father John Esper