

St Marc, Grenoble
Sunday 7th August 2022 (Trinity 8)
Hebrews 11: 1 - 3, 8 -16
Luke 12: 32 - 40
'Faith and Faithfulness'

Good Morning everyone, both here in church and those connecting on Zoom. Thanks for joining us this morning.

Let's Pray

OK, let's hear what struck you about the two readings today. What did you notice, what puzzled you, what challenged you?? ... Thanks

This morning's two readings are on the same topic - 'Faith'; and they are complimentary.

The Hebrews reading is encouraging, because it examines the results of the faith of the Children of God, going back to the earliest times. It mentions Abel, Enoch, Noah, Abraham, Sarah, Isaac and Jacob. But, the lectionary reading rather frustrates me, because it cuts so much of the story out.

The Message describes it very well: 'The fundamental fact of existence is that this trust in God, this faith, is the firm foundation under everything that makes life worth living. It's our handle on what we can't see. The act of faith is what distinguished our ancestors, set them above the crowd.'

We need to hear that clear summary again: 'Faith is the firm foundation under everything that makes life worth living.'

Following on, I decided to focus mainly on the Gospel reading, because it is 'Jesus' words and His teaching' - although that reading too is actually the last couple of verses of one passage, or pericope, and the start of the next.

As I was preparing for this morning, I noticed that I first preached on this passage almost exactly 18 years ago - and, to my surprise, I still agree with almost everything I wrote then!

Does anyone remember the Bob Marley song 'Don't worry, be happy' – it's one of those songs which just seems to go around in circles – **can you remember the next line??** As far as I remember, the song didn't actually

give a clear or valid reason either not to worry or to be happy!

When I preached on this passage, all those years ago, the title was 'Don't worry, be faithful!' But, Jesus gives us a very clear reason to 'Be faithful'

Jesus says: "Don't be afraid little flock" ... "Your Father is delighted to give you the kingdom." Wow! What a wonderful inheritance or promise! And it's not any old kingdom it is THE kingdom – The kingdom of heaven! Yes please, Lord I'd love some of that!

In my business career I always learned "There's no such thing as a free lunch – so, where's the catch?" Without missing a beat, Jesus hits us with the catch – or maybe you could call it the 'commitment indicator'! "Sell your possessions and give to the poor!" - Oh! I'm not so sure about that

Give what bit of security I have built away? He must be joking!
Why would we want to do that??

Well, the fact is, that what we think is security isn't worth the paper it's written on – in kingdom terms it is absolutely useless!

But God doesn't work with useless fakes – He only operates on 100% DEAD CERTS. And one of those is – 'You'll either be dead forever OR you'll be in the eternal party in the kingdom.'

There is NO halfway house!" You're in it OR you're dead forever! Nothing else works! So, BE IN IT or BIN IT!!!

Jesus offers us a priceless promise – absolutely 100%, rock solid security! The fact is, if anyone else offered me that, I'd be very suspicious; but because Jesus offers it, I trust Him.

Why? Because He has never let me down – ever! When it came to the crunch, Jesus went to death on the cross to save me ... and you, and YOU!

And now, He says if you trust me, and give away all that pseudo earthly security; if you're generous to others, if you give even the poorest reflection of my generosity – Jesus says: "I'll give you real solid treasure, on account, in the Bank of the Kingdom of Heaven!"

What an amazing promise that is. It's a promise for you, and a promise for me – Jesus wrote that promise in His own blood, so we know He means it!

But, to be clear, I don't think Jesus is saying it's wrong to work hard and earn money; and He isn't saying it's wrong to have good things.

What He's saying is it is wrong to make money and 'stuff' the focus of your life – or if you like – your God, your idol.

Having money and possessions is great; it means you are in a position to be generous and to help others; and that is what Jesus is telling us to do!

Sadly, day after day, the internet and the television are telling us that it's what we have, our material possessions, that are most important. But it's not true!

There is only one thing in life, which is really important - that's the way we trust Jesus and listen to him. The way in which we do what He asks us to do

However, we do have a choice – we can do it, or we can regret it – forever!

Jesus promises that our heavenly bank accounts are rock solid, and in the place where it really matters. We will have the total security of living in the kingdom of heaven and worshipping God face to face, forever!

But, we need to be prepared; we must be like the servants awaiting their master's return from the wedding feast - we must be ready for God to call us ANYTIME!

We do not know when we will be called to give account of ourselves. It may be today, or it may be in 5, 10, 20 or even 50 years' time (I doubt the latter in my case!) but, rest assured, our judgement day is coming, and we will be called to give account of ourselves and our lives!

I don't know about you, but I find that quite a salutary thought.

But, the 'Good News' is: Jesus has *promised* us a place in the Kingdom, by His grace alone and, fortunately, He is much more dependable than we are.

We can look forward with confidence to the promise of welcoming the Master, not the thief!

So, as I close let's pray:

Lord, help us to be faithful and to trust in you; help us to be generous and not to depend on materialistic earthly security, but in you alone! **Amen**