

**Midweek Lenten Series: Making Change**  
**Week of Lent 3: Change of Circumstances**  
**March 18, 2020**

**Greeting**

The grace of our Lord Jesus Christ, the love of God,  
and the communion of the Holy Spirit be with you all.  
Welcome to this third midweek service of Lent.  
We begin our service with a call to worship.

**Call to Worship**

For all our blessings, we give thanks to the Lord.  
**God is our rock and salvation,  
a help in times of plenty.**

With all our burdens, we pray to the Lord.  
**God is our rock and salvation,  
a help in times of need.**

In all our celebrations, we sing praise to the Lord.  
**God is our rock and salvation,  
a help in times of joy.**

With all our grief, we cry to the Lord.  
**God is our rock and salvation,  
a help in times of sorrow.**

We will not fear, though the earth should change.  
**God is our rock and salvation; thanks be to God!**

**Opening Prayer**

O God our rock and salvation, you walk with us through all the ups and downs of life. Whatever our circumstances, bring us closer to you. Teach us to rejoice in the good times, find hope through the bad times, and always place our trust in you. In Jesus' name we pray. Amen.

**Hymn**

*When we are living*

**630**

**Scripture Reading:** Luke 12:22-34

<sup>22</sup>He said to his disciples, "Therefore I tell you, do not worry about your life, what you will eat, or about your body, what you will wear. <sup>23</sup>For life is more than food, and the body more than clothing. <sup>24</sup>Consider the ravens: they neither sow nor reap, they have neither storehouse nor barn, and yet God feeds them. Of how much more value are

you than the birds! <sup>25</sup>And can any of you by worrying add a single hour to your span of life? <sup>26</sup>If then you are not able to do so small a thing as that, why do you worry about the rest? <sup>27</sup>Consider the lilies, how they grow: they neither toil nor spin; yet I tell you, even Solomon in all his glory was not clothed like one of these. <sup>28</sup>But if God so clothes the grass of the field, which is alive today and tomorrow is thrown into the oven, how much more will he clothe you—you of little faith! <sup>29</sup>And do not keep striving for what you are to eat and what you are to drink, and do not keep worrying. <sup>30</sup>For it is the nations of the world that strive after all these things, and your Father knows that you need them. <sup>31</sup>Instead, strive for his kingdom, and these things will be given to you as well. <sup>32</sup>“Do not be afraid, little flock, for it is your Father’s good pleasure to give you the kingdom. <sup>33</sup>Sell 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. <sup>34</sup>For where your treasure is, there your heart will be also.

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## Reflection

Sometimes I am amazed by God’s timing. I planned on doing this series, including choosing the scriptures, long before Christmas. It was at a time when the word coronavirus was not yet even known or spoken. And yet this scripture seems so directly aimed at our experience today. Let me share some thoughts.

Do not be afraid, little flock, for it is your Father’s good pleasure to give you the kingdom.

I am not sure how many times I have read this passage and skimmed that verse. I know the part about “do not worry about your life” and all the rest that follows, especially the part about “can any of you by worrying add a single hour to your span of life?” or “consider the lilies.” But the line that says “Do not be afraid, little flock, for it is your Father’s good pleasure to give you the kingdom,” somehow, I never spent time with those words and yet it is upon these words that the whole reading is hinged.

You see the passage has a lot to say about holding onto material goods and only addressing physical need. People were having trouble understanding the generosity of God and were holding tightly too all they owned, and no wonder – for the most part these followers probably didn’t have much to begin with. Theirs was a philosophy of scarcity. They thought that there wasn’t enough to go around. This is a type of thinking that us human beings seem to fall into naturally.

There is a story of a woman by the name of Eunice Pike who worked with the Mazatec Indians in south-western Mexico. During the time she worked with them she discovered some interesting things about these beautiful people. For instance, the people seldom wished someone well. Not only that, they were hesitant to teach one another or to share the gospel with each other. If asked, “Who taught you to bake bread?” the village baker answered, “I just know,” meaning he has acquired the knowledge without anyone’s help. Eunice said this odd behavior stemmed from the Indian’s concept of

"limited good." They believed there was only so much good, so much knowledge, so much love to go around. To teach another meant you might drain yourself of knowledge. To love a second child meant you had to love the first child less. To wish someone well--"Have a good day"--meant you have just given away some of your own happiness, which could not be reacquired. (Bernie May, "Learning to Trust," Multnomah Press, 1985.)

We smile when we hear such a story and think, "they just don't know better" but how often are guilty of the same kind of thinking. I know the story of a woman who was afraid that her relationship with her daughter was being threatened because she was marrying a man and the two would be living far away from her, but in the same community as her in-laws. The mother didn't understand that her daughter's love could not be diminished, that her daughter's heart could love her mom and expand even more to love the family that she was becoming a part of.

And how often in the world of business or science do we hear of people not wanting to share their knowledge for fear that it would give someone else an advantage and take away opportunity for the one who might choose to share.

We are currently living in a time when the thought of scarcity overwhelms some as people hoard toilet paper, food, and many other products for fear that there will not be enough for them. You will note that I said that the fear is that there will not be enough for *them*. They are so self-absorbed, so fearful, that they do not think of anyone else's need.

In the midst all the fear, the sense of dread, of what will happen, and the questions about "Will we have enough?", God says, "I tell you, do not worry about your life."

God loves us so much that we need not be afraid of what we experience in life whether it be scarcity or abundance, moving or staying, making new decisions about how we will live our lives or staying in our circumstances. Know and trust that it is the Father's good pleasure to give you the kingdom, which is a life of hope, joy, peace, grace, and love. Listen for God's voice leading you, watch for God's movement in your life and that of those around you, be generous of your time, your love, your possessions. Even as we find ourselves physically more isolated from one another than we are used to, God's Spirit is at work and we can reach out in love, friendship, and concern through phone calls and video chats, as well as providing for each other's physical needs where and when possible.

Trust that God is so generous, so kind, so loving, that it is his good pleasure to give you the kingdom.

### **Closing Prayer**

Lord Jesus Christ, you tell us not to be afraid of what the future holds, not to worry about tomorrow, but you know how difficult we find it to heed your words. For we worry

about so many things, our families, our friends, our circumstances, some worries big worries, most worries tiny niggles. We come before you this day with these big and tiny worries, and with confidence we know we can lay them all at your feet.

We bring our big worries about health and happiness and security for ourselves and for our loved ones. We bring big worries about the world we live in and its future existence as we continue to fail to address so many ecological problems. We bring big worries about the way people in our world are treated as less than human, exploited, tortured, helpless and abused.

Father God, we know that you are concerned with every aspect of our lives, so we also bring the little things that concern us, the worries which keep us awake at night, the worries which only you know.

Living God, reach out to all those for whom the future brings fears and uncertainties. Assure them that you are with them, even when that future seems dark and circumstances feel like they are spiraling out of control. Remind them that you are able to transform even the bleakest of situations, bring healing and wholeness.

Lord we make our prayers in faith, for we know that your Spirit is at work in our world making all things new. Amen

~ written by Rev. Anne Patton, and posted on the Church of Scotland's Starters for Sunday website. <http://www.churchofscotland.org.uk/>

## Hymn

*Take time to be holy*

**638**

## Blessing

Blessing and glory and wisdom  
And thanksgiving and honour  
And power and might  
Be to our God forever and ever. Amen.

*Service based from the resource, Sunday and Seasons 2014, Year A.  
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