

“I’m Nuts About You!”

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Luke 12:32-40

In the last sermon I preached before going on sabbatical I referred to Jesus sleeping in the back of the boat I stated, ***“I need to get in the ‘back of the boat’ where I can rest from my work in the church so God can do God’s work in me. I need to get in the ‘back of the boat’ and simply be rather than do. I need to get in the ‘back of the boat’ with my grandchildren who will not be calling me Rev. or Pastor or Doctor but, simply, ‘Grandpa.’*** At that point some of you may recall that I pulled out this ***“Go Nuts!”*** tee shirt. This refers to the Wichita Wingnuts baseball team which I assumed I would be watching with my grandchildren during my sabbatical. While I didn’t go to a Wingnuts baseball game, I did “go nuts” with Annabelle and Elliott and had the time of my life. I am nuts about my grandchildren, as I am sure those of you who have grandchildren are also nuts about yours. For those who do not have children or grandchildren I know you have people in your lives for whom you are nuts. *Who are you absolutely nuts about?*

As I anticipated my sabbatical I looked forward to *being* with Elliott and Annabelle, taking my cues from them and letting them set the agenda. I had so much fun with them. I have steadfastly resisted doing what I’m about to do but, for the sake of the sermon and to give you another glimpse of the refreshing nature of the sabbatical, I am sharing with you a few pictures of my grandchildren. (Annabelle on her way to school)---(I took Annabelle to a children’s dinner/theater featuring the play *“Junie B. Jones and a Little Monkey Business*) --- (digging for dinosaurs in a dinosaur egg) --- (watching a *Wichita Wild* arena football game....note the Carson Palmer jersey on Elliott) Like anyone you might be nuts about, I wanted to spend time with Annabelle and Elliott and I wanted to gift them anyway I possibly could. After all, I am nuts about them and I want nothing but the best for them!

In today’s Gospel reading we will see the graciousness of God and how that graciousness generates grace.

Read **Luke 12:32-40**

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 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.”

We would do well to stop and feast on the first verse letting it sink into the depths of our soul. “*Do not be afraid, little flock, for it is your Father’s good pleasure to give you the kingdom.*” Do you hear the tenderness as from a parent to a child in this verse? God, for no other reason than it simply pleases God, gives us the kingdom. God takes delight in us and for this reason alone God gives us the kingdom. We don’t deserve it, but God is giving it anyway....not because of who we are or what we’ve done but simply because it tickles God to give it to us. God is nuts about us!

Listen to it again.... “*Do not be afraid little flock, for it is your Father’s good pleasure to give you the kingdom.*” It is God’s “good pleasure” to give us God’s kingdom. *Do you believe that God takes pleasure in you?* It’s like God has our picture on God’s refrigerator. Many of us have pictures of our cherished loved ones on our refrigerators.....those we are nuts about. Think of your loved ones plastered on your refrigerator and remember that you are made in the image of God. Think of how you love them and know that your devotion, while not perfect, is a glimpse of how God feels about you! “*Do not be afraid little flock, for it is your Father’s good pleasure to give you the kingdom.*” It challenges my mind to believe that my love for Elliott and Annabelle is small potatoes compared to the way God loves us. God is nuts about us!

That is the backdrop to the rest of this passage and Jesus continues by saying, **“Sell your possessions and give alms.”** Didn’t see that one coming! Okay, let me see if I’ve got this right. God takes such pleasure in us that God is going to give us the kingdom and our response is to sell our possessions and give alms. That doesn’t seem to compute. We think of kingdoms in terms of *possessions* and *net worth*. Whoever has the most wins! Yet Jesus said, **“Sell your possessions and give alms.”** *Is Jesus out of touch with reality? Doesn’t Jesus know we’re in a recession? Doesn’t he know that the unemployment rate is over 10%? Doesn’t he know that many are worried sick that they won’t have enough?*

I don’t know about you but I have to admit that the older I get the more I think about my pension, pay check and property and how I might manage them well enough to cover the coming years. When I was younger, I didn’t think much about such things....I just assumed there would be enough. Now that my future seems to have more limitations I tend to think more seriously about such worldly matters. Yet I hear Jesus saying, **“sell your possessions and give alms”** and I’m not sure what to do with that. But I have a hunch. I think Jesus wants us to know the joy of generosity. One of the most important aspects of the joy of generosity is to hold the things that will rust and wear out loosely. Don’t live as if your life depended upon them. Freely share your money, possessions, net worth, time and talent. Live like children who have complete trust that their parents will take good care of them.

Could it be that Jesus is thinking of the beginning of creation when God gave the first humans a beautiful garden and everything they could possibly need and then declared that it was “very good?” I can hear God saying, “Oh, by-the-way it’s all yours! But please don’t eat the forbidden fruit because it will only cause you to forget the One who has given you such a great life. Remember there is nothing that will ever separate you from my love. So go and enjoy the garden! Live free! Be generous with all you have because I will always be generous to you! After all I am nuts about you!”

Yet we have to admit this *“sell your possessions and give alms”* is not easy. Each day we will be faced with decisions like, *“Do I turn inward or outward....Do I stock pile or share....do I grasp or give?”* Each day we will face temptations to say to ourselves, *“I have to wait until I have more money, time or talents to give generously.”* Each day we will face the temptation to tell ourselves, *“I will have to wait until my circumstances change to be generous.”* Here is the question, *“What do we have in person and possessions?”* No matter how much or how little, that’s what God invites us to share....today and every day!

Jesus knows the importance for our soul of selling our possessions and giving offerings. Jesus knows that giving and sharing is a reflection of who we are....it is how God created us. Remember, as people created in God’s image, we are running on all cylinders when we are sharing. God can not **not** give and when we are giving we are being true to our gloriously created nature.

Yesterday we celebrated the life of *Peg Newill*. Those who were here heard Peg’s three children share how they had grown up with the confidence that Peg and Bill were nuts about them. This sense of acceptance and love created an atmosphere in which they prospered. Today they attribute who they are and what they have accomplished to the foundation of unconditional love given by Peg and Bill. Their testimony of love for Peg was inspiring. They spoke of Peg’s life mission as being to *reach out and help others grow*. Peg was happiest when she saw family, friends, church, community and God’s good earth growing. Her children summed up Peg’s life with these words.... *“Her strong values were evident in everything she did. Just imagine what the world would be like if everyone lived life as she did. The world would be different place...that is for sure. Of course, there would be a lot less need, a lot more education and definitely—there would be a lot more flowers!”*

God is nuts about us and every day we have the opportunity to pass on God’s grace that has first been given to us. So let’s go and plant more flowers!

Amen

**Bob with his
granddaughter, Annabelle,
and grandson, Elliot**

