

12<sup>TH</sup> Sunday after Pentecost, Proper 14 August 7, 2016

LUTHERAN

## LIVING THE ^ LECTIONARY

A weekly study of the Scriptures for the coming Sunday.  
An opportunity to make the rhythms of the readings  
become a part of the rhythms of your life.

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August 4, 2016 (Thursdays at 10:00 AM)

Bethlehem Lutheran Church, 7500 State Road, Parma, OH

*(Also presented as a part of the bible study/worship midweek service at the home of Robert Russo, a Puritas Lutheran Church member. E-mail [puritaspastor@hotmail.com](mailto:puritaspastor@hotmail.com) for details.)*



<http://www.splconline.com/sermons/>

### Hymn of the Day

Lutheran Service Book (LSB) 666 The Lutheran Hymnal (TLH) 263

“O little flock, fear not the foe”

**“Verzage nicht du Häuflein klein.** [*In Trouble.*] Concerning the authorship of this hymn there are three main theories—**i.** that it is by Gustavus Adolphus; **ii.** that the ideas are his and the diction that of his chaplain, Dr. Jacob Fabricius; and **iii.** that it is by Altenburg. This hymn has ever been a favourite in Germany, was sung in the house of P. J. Spener every Sunday afternoon, and of late years has been greatly used at meetings of the Gustavus Adolphus Union—an association for the help of Protestant Churches in Roman Catholic countries. In translations it has passed into many English and American collections. Translations in common use:—

1. **Fear not, O little flock, the foe.** A good translation from the text of 1638, omitting stanza iv., by Miss Winkworth, in her *Lyra Germanica*, 1855, p. 17. Included, in England in *Kennedy*, 1863, *Snepp's Songs of Grace & Glory*, 1871, *Free Church Hymn Book*, 1882, and others; and in America in the *Sabbath Hymn Book*, 1858, *Pennsylvania Lutheran Church Book*, 1868, *Hymns of the Church*, 1869, *Baptist Hymn Book*, 1871, *Hymns and Songs of Praise*, 1874, and many others. [Rev. James Mearns, M. A.]”

-- Excerpts from John Julian, *Dictionary of Hymnology* (1907)

[http://www.hymnary.org/text/fear\\_not\\_o\\_little\\_flock\\_the\\_foe](http://www.hymnary.org/text/fear_not_o_little_flock_the_foe)

<https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=idQ9ff5krxk> Chorale prelude on Kommt her zu mir by Dietrich Buxtehude and hymn introduction by Johann Pachelbel... Mark Peters playing the Lauck pipe organ...

<https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=8mlu4H6pO3A> Concordia Publishing House, CD, “Hymns of Faith”

Several sites have commented on the hymn number in the LSB – 666. This was also the address of the Lutheran Center in NYC! If you have an hour you can listen to a podcast about this hymn by Pr. Will Weedon, Director of Worship for the Lutheran Church-Missouri Synod at <http://issuesetc.org/tag/hymn-study/>. It gives a detailed background of Lutheranism in Germany at the time of the 30 years Wars.

The Holy Bible, [English Standard Version \(ESV\)](#) Copyright © 2001 by [Crossway Bibles, a publishing ministry of Good News Publishers.](#)

**Genesis 15:1-6; RCL, Isaiah 1:1, 10-20 or Psalm 50:1-8, 22-23 (Next Week: Jeremiah 23:16-29; RCL, Isaiah 5:1-7 or Psalm 80:1-2, 8-19)**

“In Genesis chapter 15 we come to one of the high-water marks of Old Testament revelation, summarized for us in verse 6: “Then he believed in the Lord; and He reckoned it to him as righteousness.” <https://bible.org/seriespage/16-focal-point-abram-s-faith-genesis-151-21>

## God's Covenant with Abram

15 After these things the word of the LORD came to Abram in a vision: “Fear not, Abram, I am your shield; your reward shall be very great.”<sup>2</sup> But Abram said, “O Lord GOD, what will you give me, for I continue<sup>[a]</sup> childless, and the heir of my house is Eliezer of Damascus?”<sup>3</sup> And Abram said, “Behold, you have given me no offspring, and a member of my household will be my heir.”<sup>4</sup> And behold, the

word of the LORD came to him: “This man shall not be your heir; your very own son<sup>[b]</sup> shall be your heir.”<sup>5</sup> And he brought him outside and said, “Look toward heaven, and number the stars, if you are able to number them.” Then he said to him, “So shall your offspring be.”<sup>6</sup> And he believed the LORD, and he counted it to him as righteousness.

- a. [Genesis 15:2](#) Or *I shall die*
- b. [Genesis 15:4](#) Hebrew *what will come out of your own loins*

“To understand the divine promises to Abraham here in Genesis 15, it is helpful to step back and look at what has been happening in Genesis up to this point.

In Genesis 1-11 the "set" for God's action is the whole world. All of creation (including but not limited to humanity) is declared good in Genesis 1. But as the result of violence, mainly human violence (6:5), but apparently also, the violence of the wider creation (6:11, 13), God generates a flood to wipe away all the wickedness and violence. In effect, then, Genesis 6-8 functions as a kind of divine mulligan, a "do-over."

Of course not all is effaced; Noah, his family, and the representative animals connect the past to the future. But beginning in Genesis 12, the story moves decisively away from the cinemascopic perspective of the whole world, and zooms in on one man and his family. Instead of pondering the wickedness and violence of human beings, that, as God realizes, is not going away (Genesis 8:21), and instead of trying to work blessing for the world through humanity in general, God takes a new approach: working through some particular individuals to bless all the families of the earth (12:3). It is a decision to work *universal* benefit through *particular* individuals--a strange idea for many moderns, but one that God repeats in the incarnation of Jesus...

But as we will see, the road of mutual trust is neither straight nor smooth for these two--there will be other obstacles and tests before both are satisfied in the character and trustworthiness of the other. Abraham's reputation in the tradition is one of unparalleled virtue, but the story itself suggests more ambiguity; it gives a mixed picture of Abraham's moral character. This is in keeping with all other significant Old Testament characters--the "heroes" of the faith were all flawed and broken in one way or another, just like the rest of us."

[https://www.workingpreacher.org/preaching.aspx?commentary\\_id=651](https://www.workingpreacher.org/preaching.aspx?commentary_id=651) Jacqueline E. Lapsley is associate professor of Old Testament at Princeton Theological Seminary... She is interested in literary readings of the Old Testament narratives, the prophets, Old Testament ethics, and theological anthropology in the Old Testament. Her courses cover sin and salvation in the Old Testament, women in the Old Testament narratives, and Old Testament ethics.

**Psalm 33:12-22; RCL, Genesis 15:1-6 or Psalm 33:12-22 (*Psalm 119:81-88; RCL Jeremiah 23:23-29 or Psalm 82*)**

## The Steadfast Love of the LORD

...<sup>10</sup> *The LORD brings the counsel of the nations to nothing;  
he frustrates the plans of the peoples.*

<sup>11</sup> *The counsel of the LORD stands forever,  
the plans of his heart to all generations.*

<sup>12</sup> Blessed is the nation whose God is the LORD,  
the people whom he has chosen as his heritage!

<sup>13</sup> The LORD looks down from heaven;  
he sees all the children of man;

<sup>14</sup> from where he sits enthroned he looks out  
on all the inhabitants of the earth,

<sup>15</sup> he who fashions the hearts of them all  
and observes all their deeds.

<sup>16</sup> The king is not saved by his great army;  
a warrior is not delivered by his great strength.

<sup>17</sup> The war horse is a false hope for salvation,  
and by its great might it cannot rescue.

<sup>18</sup> Behold, the eye of the LORD is on those who fear him,  
on those who hope in his steadfast love,

<sup>19</sup> that he may deliver their soul from death  
and keep them alive in famine.

<sup>20</sup> Our soul waits for the LORD;  
he is our help and our shield.

<sup>21</sup> For our heart is glad in him,  
because we trust in his holy name.

<sup>22</sup> Let your steadfast love, O LORD, be upon us,  
even as we hope in you.

“...One of the table prayers we have used in our family has been "God is great, God is good, and we thank him for our food." This prayer summarizes the pattern of the psalms of praise in the Bible: it expresses *praise and thanks* and gives two *reasons* for praise and thanks: God's greatness and God's goodness.

I suggest that Psalm 33 is an excellent choice for preaching this Sunday considering it as a whole. It follows the typical pattern of hymns or psalms of praise in the Bible with *imperative plurals* calling to praise (verses 1-3, "Rejoice, Praise, Sing") followed by *reasons* for praise, including God's *greatness* (verses 4-12) and God's *goodness* (verses 13-19). The psalm is then rounded off with an affirmation of *trust* (verses 20-21) and a *request* addressed to the Lord in "you" form (verse 22).

### **The Same Old Songs? (verses 1-3)**

The three imperative plural verbs are addressed to the congregation: "rejoice, praise, sing."

These three verses provide thought for a worship committee:

1. Worship should be joyful! (verse 1)
2. Worship may include the use of musical instruments, mentioned here for the first time in the psalms; a modern-day writer would have spoken of trumpets, trombones, guitars, harps.
3. Worship of the Creator ought to be marked by creativity. In other words, let us have a few new songs in the language and melodies of our own age! (verse 3)
4. Those leading worship ought to be well trained so that they "play skillfully." Let us worship God with the best musicians and poets we have! After all, we are following in the tradition of Johann Sebastian Bach!
5. Worship ought to be enthusiastic, even with the volume turned up! (verse 3)

### **Why Praise? God is Great! (verses 4-12)**

Now the psalm gives some reasons for praising God. The first word of verses 4 and 9 is "for," bracketing that section as a unit. Why praise God? Because God created the whole cosmos and especially our "blue planet" with its deep blue seas. How did God do this? The psalmist picks up the notion of creation through the word. God said "let there be"—and there it was! (Genesis 1).

The "God is great" theme continues in verses 10-12 when the writer reflects on God's work in history. As the prophets make clear, God was concerned not only with what was happening in Israel and Judah! God was also involved with the great nations of their day, in the actions of Assyria, Babylon, Persian and Greece (see Amos 9:7-8, Isaiah 13-23, Jeremiah 46-51). And while God may be moving in mysterious ways in our own time, we may assume that God is also concerned about what happens in the nations of our time, Iraq or Afghanistan, Africa or Antarctica, the United Kingdom or the United States. Psalm 32 had things to say about individual happiness (32:1-2, 11). **Psalm 33:12 asserts that a people whose God is the Lord -- will be blessed.**

### **Why Praise? The Lord is Good! (verses 13-19)**

I recall touring a Greek Orthodox church where there was, front and center, near the ceiling, a painting of a huge eye, with a brown iris and black pupil. Our guide explained: "That painting represents the eye of God. Walk around anyplace in our sanctuary, look back and you will see that the eye of God is watching you!" Verses 13-15 declare that the Lord looks down at what is happening on our planet. Verses 18-19 promise that the Lord "keeps an eye on us." Children, as we know, love to have their parents and grandparents "keeping an eye" on them. They like be watched and praised for their accomplishments. But I think they also like the sense that someone who loves them is watching, protecting, in case anything should go wrong! God is great, says this psalm, and God is also good. That goodness is expressed in the declaration of God's *steadfast love* (Hebrew, *hesed*; verses 5, 18). The prophet Isaiah had said that the earth was filled with the glory of God (Isaiah 6:3). This psalm says that the earth is filled -- with God's *steadfast love* (*hesed*, verse 5). Thus, we ought not locate God only high in the heavens...but think of God in terms of a cloud of amazing grace, spread throughout the entire planet! The fact that God has an eye on us is reason for fear and trust in God's *steadfast love* (*hesed*, verse 18).

**In the Meantime (20-22)**

The writer catches our mood as we live out our days. We can be glad because we can trust. Finally, we can pray (and here is the third *hesed*) "Let your steadfast love be upon us, as we live in hope."...

[https://www.workingpreacher.org/preaching.aspx?commentary\\_id=653](https://www.workingpreacher.org/preaching.aspx?commentary_id=653)  
[James Limburg](#) Professor Emeritus of Old Testament, Luther Seminary, Saint Paul, Minn

**Hebrews 11:1-16; RCL, Hebrews 11:1-3, 8-16** (*Hebrews 11:17-31 (32-40); 12:1-3; RCL, Hebrews 11:29-12:2*) *The readings for August all come from Hebrews.*

**By Faith**

11 Now faith is the assurance of things hoped for, the conviction of things not seen. <sup>2</sup> For by it the people of old received their commendation. <sup>3</sup> **By faith** we understand that the universe was created by the word of God, so that what is seen was not made out of things that are visible.

<sup>4</sup> **By faith** Abel offered to God a more acceptable sacrifice than Cain, through which he was commended as righteous, God commending him by accepting his gifts. And through his faith, though he died, he still speaks. <sup>5</sup> **By faith** Enoch was taken up so that he should not see death, and he was not found, because God had taken him. Now before he was taken he was commended as having pleased God. <sup>6</sup> And without faith it is impossible to please him, for whoever would draw near to God must believe that he exists and that he rewards those who seek him. <sup>7</sup> **By faith** Noah, being warned by God concerning events as yet unseen, in reverent fear constructed an ark for the saving of his household. By this he condemned the world and became an heir of the righteousness that comes by faith.

<sup>8</sup> **By faith** Abraham obeyed when he was called to go out to a place that he was to receive as an inheritance. And he went out, not knowing where he was going. <sup>9</sup> **By faith** he went to live in the land of promise, as in a foreign land, living in tents with Isaac and Jacob, heirs with him of the same promise. <sup>10</sup> For he was looking forward to the city that has foundations, whose designer and builder is God. <sup>11</sup> **By faith** Sarah herself received power to conceive, even when she was past the age, since she considered him faithful who had promised. <sup>12</sup> Therefore from one man, and him as good as dead, were born descendants as many as the stars of heaven and as many as the innumerable grains of sand by the seashore.

<sup>13</sup> These all died in faith, not having received the things promised, but having seen them and greeted them from afar, and having acknowledged that they were strangers and exiles on the earth. <sup>14</sup> For people who speak thus make it clear that they are seeking a homeland. <sup>15</sup> If they had been thinking of that land from which they had gone out, they would have had opportunity to return. <sup>16</sup> But as it is, they

desire a better country, that is, a heavenly one. Therefore God is not ashamed to be called their God, for he has prepared for them a city. (**Bold added**)

“Today’s second lesson begins the first of four weeks that are devoted to a sequential reading of the last three chapters of the Epistle to Hebrews.

Only in the RCL Year B (Propers 23-28) is there a comparable dedication to Hebrew’s distinctive theological world. This “Year C” series from Hebrews provides an opportunity not only for the preacher to delve into the epistle with some intentionality over the course of a month, but also opens the door to the possibility for a sustained parish Bible study on this rich text.

The narrative arch of the four weeks’ readings from Hebrews is stunning in its reach. It begins with the famous definition of faith in 11:1, “Now faith is the assurance of things hoped for, the conviction of things not seen.” The text then quickly moves back to creation (11:3) to note that God’s Word is a power that creates “what is seen ... from things that are not visible.” This statement (verse 3) can actually function as a rubric for Hebrews’ extensive reflections concerning faith through these four weeks...”

[https://www.workingpreacher.org/preaching.aspx?commentary\\_id=1748](https://www.workingpreacher.org/preaching.aspx?commentary_id=1748) [Erik Heen](#), *John H.P. Reumann Professor in Biblical Studies The Lutheran Theological Seminary at Philadelphia*

## “The Holy Gospel according to St. Luke, the 12th Chapter

### “Glory to You, O Lord”

**Luke 12:22-34 (35-40); RCL Luke 12:22-40 (Luke 12:49-53 (54-56); RCL, Luke 12:49-56)**

#### **Do Not Be Anxious**

<sup>22</sup> And he said to his disciples, “**Therefore I tell you, do not be anxious about your life, what you will eat, nor about your body, what you will put on.** <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 which of you by being anxious can add a single hour to his span of life?<sup>[a]</sup> <sup>26</sup> If then you are not able to do as small a thing as that, why are you anxious about the rest? <sup>27</sup> Consider the lilies, how they grow: they neither toil nor spin,<sup>[b]</sup> yet I tell you, even Solomon in all his glory was not arrayed like one of these. <sup>28</sup> But if God so clothes the grass, which is alive in the field today, and tomorrow is thrown into the oven, how much more will he clothe you, O you of little faith! <sup>29</sup> And do not seek what you are to eat and what you are to drink, nor be worried. <sup>30</sup> For all the nations of the world seek after these things, and your Father knows that you need them. <sup>31</sup> Instead, seek his<sup>[c]</sup> kingdom, and these things will be added to you.

<sup>32</sup> “Fear not, little flock, for it is your Father's good pleasure to give you the kingdom. <sup>33</sup> Sell your possessions, and give to the needy. Provide yourselves with

moneybags that do not grow old, with a treasure in the heavens that does not fail, where no thief approaches and no moth destroys. <sup>34</sup> For where your treasure is, there will your heart be also.

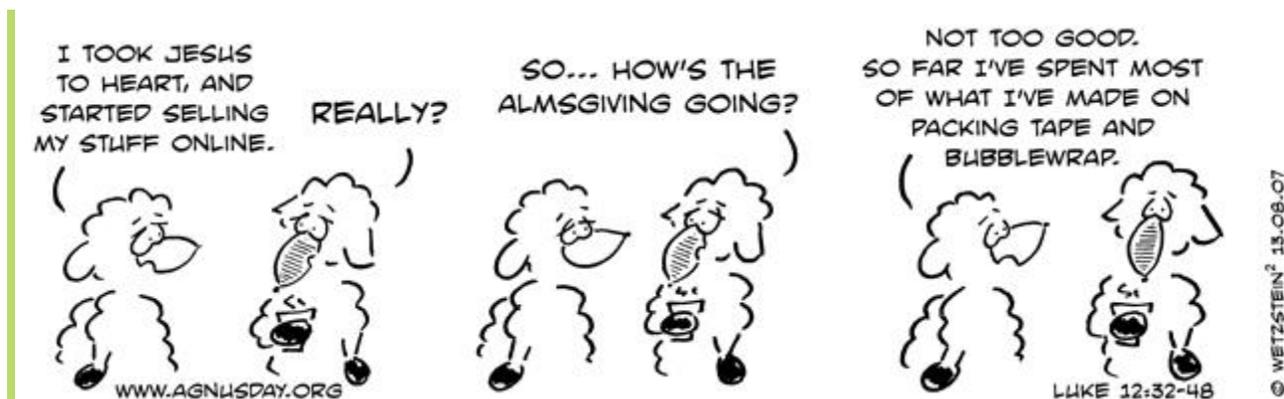
### ***You Must Be Ready***

<sup>35</sup> “*Stay dressed for action<sup>[d]</sup> and keep your lamps burning,* <sup>36</sup> *and be like men who are waiting for their master to come home from the wedding feast, so that they may open the door to him at once when he comes and knocks.* <sup>37</sup> *Blessed are those servants<sup>[e]</sup> whom the master finds awake when he comes. Truly, I say to you, he will dress himself for service and have them recline at table, and he will come and serve them.* <sup>38</sup> *If he comes in the second watch, or in the third, and finds them awake, blessed are those servants!* <sup>39</sup> *But know this, that if the master of the house had known at what hour the thief was coming, he<sup>[f]</sup> would not have left his house to be broken into.* <sup>40</sup> *You also must be ready, for the Son of Man is coming at an hour you do not expect.”*

- a. [Luke 12:25](#) Or a single cubit to his stature; a cubit was about 18 inches or 45 centimeters
- b. [Luke 12:27](#) Some manuscripts Consider the lilies; they neither spin nor weave
- c. [Luke 12:31](#) Some manuscripts God's
- d. [Luke 12:35](#) Greek Let your loins stay girded; compare [Exodus 12:11](#)
- e. [Luke 12:37](#) Greek bondservants
- f. [Luke 12:39](#) Some manuscripts add would have stayed awake and

***“This is the Gospel of the Lord”    “Praise to You, O Christ***

“...What’s most notable about Jesus’ words here is that his command to give alms does not center on the needs of the poor, but of the wealthy. There’s no talk of how much better off the poor would be with the alms we give. Instead, we will be better off...”  
<http://www.politicaltheology.com/blog/the-politics-of-scripture-luke-1232-40-maryann-mckibben-dana/> The Rev. MaryAnn McKibben Dana is pastor of Idylwood Presbyterian Church.



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