

SERMON - August 10, 2025

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Luke 12:32-40

“Do not be afraid, little flock, for it is your Father’s good pleasure to give you the kingdom. 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. For where your treasure is, there your heart will be also.

“Be dressed for action and have your lamps lit; be 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. Blessed are those 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. If he comes during the middle of the night or near dawn and finds them so, blessed are they.

“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. You also must be ready, for the Son of Man is coming at an hour you do not expect.”

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Hello! My name is Deacon Gretchen Peterson and I serve as the Assistant to the National Bishop for Youth and Leadership. I live, work and play in Saskatoon which is Treaty 6 territory and the Homeland of the Métis. I am grateful to those who have come before me, who have taken care of these lands and the beautiful South Saskatchewan River, which flows not far from my home.

I'm also grateful to join you today, wherever you call home, to be part of your worship this day, August 10, the 19th Sunday in Ordinary Time, and also International Youth Day.

I have this habit when I get something cool or something that is one of a kind, I tend to hold onto it. I hide it away. I store up this treasure.

For example, I have a huge pile of cool stickers. Some of them I've had for years. I don't want to stick them onto something, because then they are used – if I have to throw that something away, then the sticker is gone too.

So instead, I store these stickers in a pile, in my office. And then I don't really get to see them or enjoy them – and neither does anyone else. This feels a bit ridiculous.

Is there something that feels valuable to you that you hold onto, like I'm holding onto these stickers? And then in the end, you don't get to enjoy it for what it is? You don't get to enjoy it for what it was created for?

Over the past year, I've really challenged myself to use the things I have, in the here and now. Not to hold onto them for that special "some day." But to recognize that things are meant to bring me joy now. Not just in the future on some magically special day.

We all have these treasures in our lives. Sometimes the messages of scarcity and fear we hear in our society end up encouraging us to hold onto these treasures, instead of experiencing them in the here and now.

As I write this sermon, I am fresh off of being in Winnipeg for our 2025 National Convention. It was a wonderful convention – full of engaging conversation, beautiful worship, meaningful presentations, and important work like electing a new National Bishop, national church council officers and members. There were so many amazing moments. But for me, the most significant moments at a convention are always the same – the time I get to spend with the delegates who are 30 years old and under.

Altogether there were 28 delegates who were between the ages of 16 – 30 at this convention. This is a record for us! Our goal is to have at least 20% of the delegation be 30 and under – and that would be 30 individuals. What a great moment for us as a church, to have so many young people sign up – to take time off from work, or use their vacation days – to join in convention for the business of the church!

As a church, we are heading into a time of change. We are being asked to listen and to speak with one another, as we engage in a consultative process, across the whole ELCIC. We are being asked to face our current financial and structural realities and realize we can't keep operating the same way we have been. We started some of this work at convention and it will continue, across the whole ELCIC, over the next 3 years. I hope you will engage in this work when the opportunity presents itself to you and your congregation!

We are being asked to be prepared – to face some tough realities and be ready to make changes and dream up creative ventures. This will require us to be courageous.

I anticipated people approaching this with fear and trepidation, but it has been remarkable. People seem to be ready to engage in this important work – and that is so encouraging! Folks seem to be ready to find ways to collaborate and to work together, right across the whole country, as we find a way to be a current, relevant expression of the Lutheran faith today and into tomorrow.

So, it seems this text from Luke can serve as a good reminder for us, in this current reality we, the ELCIC, find ourselves in!

We need to be prepared – so let us engage in the processes that become available to us, to talk with each other and listen to each other about why we love God and why we seek ways to be the church in our communities.

We need to find our treasures – there are treasures all around us! In our congregations, in our communities, on our committees. Let us find these treasures and raise them up! Let us not store them away, waiting for the perfect day. Instead, let us lift them up and highlight them! I think some of our treasures might surprise us so let us be open to things we might not be expecting!

One of the important things we will need to do is listen to our youth and young adults. These folks are definitely treasures in our church. As those of us who were at convention witnessed many times, the youth and young adults of the ELCIC are ready for action! They are ready to be the church, right now. They are ready to provide leadership in amazing ways – and they already are - in their congregations, in their synods and in their

communities. These folks aren't the future of our church – they are the present and the future.

So, we need to be prepared to listen to our youth and young adults. And we need to be prepared to act on what they tell us, about how they experience church and how they engage in their faith.

We need to be prepared, dressed for action.

We need to raise up our treasures, for that is where our hearts are.

We need to give, so that we can take care of others.

We need to be ready to serve, for that is God's call for each of us, God's beloved children.

I truly believe that if we listen to God's word in these verses from Luke, and remind each other to be thoughtful, be compassionate, be courageous – then we will see the kingdom of God in our midst, here and now. We won't feel the need to store up our treasures, like my cool stickers, for another day or time. We will be a gift to the world, if we step up and engage in Christ's call to not only serve each other, but also those in our communities.

May we be ready to engage with each other in meaningful and thoughtful ways. May we be ready to be creative. May we be ready to look for God in the unusual places. May we be ready to lift up the voices of the youth and young adults in our churches and in our communities. May we be ready to be God's feet and hands in our world, here and now. *Amen.*