

## 19<sup>th</sup> Sunday in Ordinary Time – Luke 12:32-48

During his sermon, the pastor asked his congregation who wanted to go to heaven, to raise their hands. Everyone in the audience did so--except for one elderly man sitting near the front. The preacher pointed his finger at him and said, "Sir, do you mean to tell us that you don't want to go to heaven?" "Sure I do," the old man answered, "but the way you put the question, I figured you were getting up a busload for tonight!"

**“Much will be required of the person entrusted with much, and still more will be demanded of the person entrusted with more.”**

A young woman asked her elderly mother, “How do you keep your faith in God when you can’t see any evidence that He is answering your prayers?” And the wise older Christian mother replied, “Through my years as a believer in God, I have found that God often moves in mysterious ways—and also that He usually moves powerfully slow.”

We want God to answer our prayers, and fulfill His promises, on **our** timetable—NOW, if not sooner. But many times our lives and service before God resemble the architects and builders of the great European cathedrals in the Middle Ages, many of which took centuries to complete.

Just imagine the construction of a cathedral that required many **generations** of workers in a village before it was completed. How did it feel for those workers to give an entire life working on a project, knowing that they would never live to see it finished? It was certainly a case in patience, when the great achievement of a lifetime took more than a single lifetime.

But this kind of patience, as a component of faith, is difficult for our modern sense of time. We live in a world that is defined by **urgency**. We carry our laptops, iPhones and iPads with wireless connections to the Internet so we can get our news and stock quotes immediately.

We talk over cell phones with instant e-mail capability because we demand **instant** access to communication. Heaven forbid that we might have to wait until we get home and answer that old clunker of a desk phone! We are so impatient.

That is why we love gadgets that speed up the time between the start and the finish of a project. I like to call us the **microwave oven generation**. Think about it. Who would do without their microwave oven, that can cook a baked potato in four minutes, or boil water in two?

Those things used to take so much longer on the conventional stove, and much longer in days gone by when our ancestors had to gather and cut firewood.

But admit it, even with your microwave oven, have you ever stood there watching the timer impatiently as the microwave cooked your popcorn in less than three minutes, and wondered aloud “When will this be done? This popcorn is taking forever to cook?” 10..9..8..7 CANCEL!

That’s us. We prefer instant gratification over saving for the future. Our credit card balances prove that sad fact to us. We lay down squares of grass sod for our lawn rather than wait for grass seed to grow.

We would rather endure the pain of surgery to quickly fix our body fat imperfections than hit the gym or push back from the table.

One of the great sins in our culture is the sin of having to wait. So, we built interstate highways without red lights and intersections, and put in a fast lane reserved for the impatient and hurried.

So when it comes to our relationship with God, it stands to reason that we bring our impatience and sense of hurried time there as well.

But God will have nothing of it. He does not allow **us** to set His clock. God is not anxious and hurried, just because we are. And our demands for God to answer our prayers in microwave time hold little influence over God's clock.

That's why the wise older saintly mother could counsel her daughter to be patient in her faith, because sometimes God does seem to move powerfully slow—at least by our hurried sense of time.

Our scripture lessons today address this aspect of faith. In the reading from Wisdom and Hebrews, the people who showed faith in God did so by believing in a promise of God, that would not be fulfilled in their lifetimes, and yet they believed anyway.

Wisdom tells us that the Patriarchs foresaw the Passover miracle by faith, even though it would be several centuries before Moses would lead the Israelites out of Egypt. And the book of Hebrews says Abraham spent his entire life on a journey after God without much evidence that God was going to honor the Divine promises anytime **within** his lifetime.

Can you imagine believing God would still give you descendants as numerous as the sands of the sea, when at ninety you were still childless? How many of us would wait that long for a promise that looked that unpromising?

God calls us to be faithful whether or not we live to see every riddle solved, every prayer answered, or every injustice made right. What makes our brief few years in a lifespan the limit for God's activity?

Doesn't it take more than our few years on earth for the full impact of our own lives to mature?

But this kind of faith, to believe in God beyond the limits of our own sight and even beyond the limits of our own lives, calls us to abandon our selfish and urgent schedules.

So it doesn't seem natural for us. And **that** is precisely why we must hear these scriptures again and again. Like the civil rights leader, Martin Luther King, Jr., we must have a dream in our faith that sustains us, whether or not we live to see it fully realized.

So that brings us back to our experience of faith, and our sense of God's timing. You're praying for your loved ones. You're caring for the sick among us. You're working toward the alleviation of poverty. You long to see a renewal of faith in our country.

All of these, and many others, are your prayers and your labor for God. Can you trust God to act in love and justice, with wisdom and timing that is beyond your understanding, and perhaps even beyond your years on this earth?

If so, you will have joined a long line of women and men through the ages who are champions of faith, whose lives continue to impact the coming of the Kingdom of God on earth.

You will have finally set the hands of your **faith** clock, not on clock time, not on life time, but on God Time.

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AMEN.