



GREAT RESPONSIBILITIES

Pastor Charlie Berthoud

Sunday, February 2, 2025

“Great Responsibilities” | Luke 12:42-48 | Pastor Charlie Berthoud

I have good news! In case you have forgotten, or in case you never really knew, we are people of good news.

Jesus began his ministry with a proclamation of good news, as we read in Mark 1:14-15.

The Good News

One: Friends, hear and believe the **Good News** of the Gospel.

All: In Jesus Christ we are forgiven, and we are loved.

winter 2025 sermon series: the Gospel of Luke

“Jesus came to Galilee proclaiming the good news of God and saying, ‘The time is fulfilled, and the kingdom of God has come near; repent, and believe in the good news.’”

Every Sunday we celebrate the good news of God’s love. After we confess our sins, we hear the proclamation, in one way or another: “Hear and believe the good news of the gospel. In Jesus Christ, we are forgiven.”

Every time we have a baptism, we celebrate the good news that all are beloved children of God. The traditional liturgy includes 1 John 3:1, which says “See what love the Father has given us, that we should be called children of God, and that is what we are.”

And every time we say the word gospel, we affirm good news, because the word gospel means good news.

During January and February this year, we are celebrating the good news of God’s love for everyone with our focus on the gospel according to Luke. Of the four gospels, Luke has the strongest accent on this idea of good news for everyone.

We see it right in the beginning.

At the birth of Jesus, the angel proclaims good news of great joy for all the people.

The angel said to them, “Do not be afraid, for see, I am bringing you good news of great joy for all the people....”

Scan here to have the devotional emailed to you!

Good News for All

Reflections on the Gospel of Luke

COVENANT PRESBYTERIAN CHURCH

Winter Devotional January & February 2025

John the Baptist teaches the people to share their clothes and their food with people in need, and this is described as good news.

John said to them, “Whoever has two coats must share with anyone who has none, and whoever has food must do likewise....” So with many other exhortations he proclaimed the good news to the people.

In Jesus’ very first sermon, he reads from the scroll of the prophet Isaiah, proclaiming that he has been anointing by God to proclaim good news to the poor and the prisoners and others who had been forgotten or ignored. In Luke 4.18 we read:

“The Spirit of the Lord is upon me,
because he has anointed me
to bring good news to the poor.
He has sent me to proclaim release to the captives
and recovery of sight to the blind,
to set free those who are oppressed,

So, we are people of good news. But the gospel isn’t just about making us feel good.

If you’ve been reading along with our schedule, you might be wondering “what happened to good news?” Luke began with those proclamations of good news, along with accounts of healings and the teachings about seeds growing into abundant harvests.

But as we move through Luke we hear tough teachings from Jesus:

- Love your enemies; be good to those who hate you. (Luke 6:27)
- “If any wish to come after me, let them deny themselves and take up their cross daily and follow me. (Luke 9:23)
- “How hard it is for those who have wealth to enter the kingdom of God! Indeed, it is easier for a camel to go through the eye of a needle than for someone who is rich to enter the kingdom of God.” (Luke 18:24-25)

As I mentioned two weeks ago, it has been said that Jesus came to comfort the afflicted and to afflict the comfortable.

For those of us who are mostly on the comfortable side, the “affliction” is meant to help us see that the good news isn’t just for us; it’s for everyone.

Our reading for today continues in the spirit of challenging teachings – teachings perhaps intended to afflict the comfortable.

I’ve chosen seven verses from Luke 12, which is what you’ll read tomorrow if you on schedule with our devotional. These words do **not** appear in the Revised Common Lectionary, and thus

most Christians have rarely if ever heard them.

While Jesus has plenty of strong words for the religious and political leaders of his day, today's reading is directed to his followers.

It seems that some of his followers aren't really hearing the seriousness of the call to follow him and to live as God's people.

I want to read the final verse first, so you'll know where this reading is going.

From everyone to whom much has been given, much will be required, and from the one to whom much has been entrusted, even more will be demanded."

In *The Message*, this verse is rendered:

Great gifts mean great responsibilities; greater gifts, greater responsibilities!

The verses you're about to hear speak in rather harsh terms, contrasting those who are lazy with those who are diligent. The imagery is rather graphic. I don't believe we are meant to take these harsh words literally; I think Jesus spoke in a metaphorical and disturbing way to get our attention, to help us wake up and live with purpose.

Listen for God's word.

"And the Lord said, "Who, then, is the faithful and prudent manager whom his master will put in charge of his slaves, to give them their allowance of food at the proper time? Blessed is that slave whom his master will find at work when he arrives. Truly I tell you, he will put that one in charge of all his possessions. But if that slave says to himself, 'My master is delayed in coming,' and begins to beat the other slaves, men and women, and to eat and drink and get drunk, the master of that slave will come on a day when he does not expect him and at an hour that he does not know and will cut him in pieces and put him with the unfaithful. That slave who knew what his master wanted but did not prepare himself or do what was wanted will receive a severe beating. But the one who did not know and did what deserved a beating will receive a light beating. From everyone to whom much has been given, much will be required, and from the one to whom much has been entrusted, even more will be demanded."

Jesus said, "From everyone to whom much has been given, much will be required."

Great gifts mean great responsibilities.

One person who recognized their gifts and their responsibilities was former president Jimmy Carter, who died in December at age 100.

While historians debate the efficacy of his political career, after his term as president, he built homes with Habitat for Humanity, he taught Sunday School at his church, he worked for peace around the world, using his position of authority not to line his bank account, but instead for the good of others.



One of his better-known quotes reflects the reality of his life:

“I have one life and one chance to make it count for something. I’m free to choose that something. That something—the something that I’ve chosen—is my faith. My faith demands that I do whatever I can, wherever I can, whenever I can, for as long as I can with whatever I have, to try to make a difference.”

And he seemed to understand the message our scripture reading today, which encourages us all to be diligent in whatever work we have to do, with whatever time we have. Carter said: “We should live our lives as though Christ were coming this afternoon.”

God has high expectations for us, especially those of us who have been given a lot.

Many of us might look around and think “I haven’t been given much compared to all those really billionaires.”

To help us put things in perspective, let’s look at some simple facts:

A United Nations study last year found that two billion people, about 25% of the world, do not have access to clean drinking water. One out of four.

<https://www.npr.org/2023/03/22/1165248040/1-in-4-people-in-world-lack-clean-drinking-water-u-n-says>

Over 1.5 billion people, about one out of five, still do not have basic sanitation services, such as private toilets or latrines. <https://www.who.int/news-room/fact-sheets/detail/sanitation>

I’m guessing that everyone hearing these words has access to clean water and functioning toilet.

I share this info not to make us wallow in guilt, but to remind us that we do have more than we usually think. Let’s not complain about what we don’t have but acknowledge and be thankful for what we do have.

- We have basic needs available—food, water, toilets
- We have the ability to be in church or be online
- We have the gift of today; we are alive.

With these gifts, we can do something, right?

Jesus repeatedly focused on people who were poor, oppressed, and suffering. As his followers, we're called to continue what he began.

There is a well circulated story about a man who dies and stands at the gates of heaven before St Peter, who says "Before I let you in, please roll up your sleeves." A bit puzzled, the man rolls up his sleeves exposing his arms. St. Peter looks at his arms and asks, "Where are your scars?" The man, still puzzled, says he doesn't have any. St. Peter responds, "Was there nothing worth fighting for?"

In light of the scripture for today, St. Peter might be asking "With all the gifts and blessings you have, didn't you realize that you have a responsibility to make this world a better place?"

Or he might say: "Your calling as a Christian is to do something, do anything to make life better for your neighbors, and this might mean getting your hands and little dirty, or getting a scrape or two."

Friends we have been blessed with the gift of life, and many other gifts. Our responsibility is to use these gifts well, to make the world a better place, following in the footsteps of Jesus.

Poet Mary Oliver helps us ponder our responsibilities with the simple question:

"Tell me what is it you plan to do with your one wild and precious life?"

Earlier in chapter 12, Jesus tells his followers, "Be dressed and ready for action." It seems that we need to be intentional about our clothing. The Bible has a few teachings about clothes.

In Colossians 3, we are encouraged to clothe ourselves with compassion, kindness, and love. Sometimes those are the clothes we need.

As God's chosen ones, holy and beloved, clothe yourselves with compassion, kindness, humility, meekness, and patience... Above all, clothe yourselves with love.

And in Ephesians 6, we're encouraged to put on the full armor of God, to be ready for the struggles of life, for the struggles which might lead to some scars.

Therefore take up the whole armor of God, so that you may be able to withstand on the evil day and, having prevailed against everything, to stand firm.

As you get dressed tomorrow, I encourage you to prayerful ask God to help you figure what your responsibility is.

Let us pray

Dear God, thank you for the good news of your love for the whole world.

For those who are afflicted today, for those who are hurting in body mind or spirit, we pray that the good news of your love, your peace, your healing will surround us and sustain us.

For those who are comfortable, maybe too comfortable, we pray that you'll help us to recognize our blessings and find the courage and the conviction to live with purpose, to love our neighbors and serve your Kingdom, your Realm. Amen.

Benediction: Inspired by the example of Jimmy Carter and the words of Jesus Christ, I want to close with the words of John Wesley

“Do all the good you can,
By all the means you can,
In all the ways you can,
In all the places you can,
At all the times you can,
To all the people you can,
As long as ever you can.”