



Pentecost 9

August 10, 2025

St. Timothy Lutheran Church, Portland, OR

**THE LESSONS: Genesis 15:1-6; Psalm
33:12-22; Hebrews 11:1-3, 8-16; Luke
12:32-40**

**THE SERMON: “Let Us Walk with
Jesus...”**

**Grace and Peace to you in the NAME of GOD: Father, Son, and
Holy Spirit. Amen.**

INTRODUCTION

Several years ago when Marilyn and I visited my Uncle Shig and Auntie Koko in Los Angeles. They took us to a little Japanese restaurant near their home and, as we were finishing our dinner, the late actor, Pat Morita, from “Happy Days,” and “The Karate Kid,” came into the restaurant with two young children. My aunt whispered, “That’s Pat Morita, Arnold from “Happy Days.” Then, a certain redhead, who shall remain nameless, told us that she wanted his autograph and we scrounged up paper and a pen and she went over to his table. After talking with him for a couple of minutes, she rushed back to our table and told us we had to leave right away. We left hurriedly and, in the car, this nameless redhead told us that, as she was waiting for Morita’s autograph, she asked if the two children were his grandchildren. Pat Morita gave her a cold stare and handed her the autographed paper and growled, “These are MY children...”

Genesis 15:1-6

I don’t think Abram would have reacted like Pat Morita did to Marilyn when Isaac was born. After the frustration of not having an heir as presented in our First Lesson today and with Isaac’s subsequent birth, Abram probably would have proudly said, “I’m a hundred years old and this is my son!” We also know that, after the three strangers told Abram that Sarai would become pregnant, both Sarai and he laughed and

named their son “laughter,” Isaac. But, our lesson precedes Isaac’s birth and, after expressing his frustration, God tells him, “... no one but your very own issue shall be your heir.... Look toward heaven and count the stars, if you are able to count them... “So shall your descendants be.” Then, our lesson tells us, “ And he believed the Lord, and the Lord reckoned it to him as righteousness.” So, our lesson is really about faith. You’d have to have faith if you didn’t have any children and God tells you that your descendants would be more than the stars in sky. But, as good Lutherans we know that Paul’s claim in Ephesians is the basis of our faith, “For it is by grace you have been saved, through faith—and this is not from yourselves, it is the gift of God— not by works, so that no one can boast.” So, why is it that I grew up thinking that I had to be good in order for God to love me? God loves sinners, including me. Heaven is full of sinners who know that they are forgiven. If God didn’t love sinners, heaven would be empty because no one is perfect, not even Christians, not even Lutherans. Like Abram, God reckons our faith as righteousness and we are reminded that with God nothing is impossible.

Psalm 33:12-22

The psalmist who composed Psalm 33 believed that his faith made him righteous enough to stand before God because God is our Savior, “Truly the eye of the Lord is on those who fear him, on those who hope in his steadfast love, to deliver their soul from death...” And, we know in the ancient Hebrew mind that death is, not only when our hearts stop beating, but death is also when we are not in fellowship and relationship with God. So, the psalmist believed that we are being saved from spiritual death - being separated and divorced from God. Mother Theresa saw this spiritual death in America because of our loneliness, lack of love, and a sense of meaninglessness. While acknowledging the existence of material poverty in her ministry in India, she pointed out that the "poverty of being unwanted, unloved, and uncared for" is a more profound and pervasive issue in the United States and other so-called “developed nations.” Since Mother Theresa’s death in 1997, it seems that our spiritual poverty is on the rise. So, maybe the psalmist is warning our politicians, “The Lord looks down from heaven; God sees all humankind... and observes all their

deeds. A king is not saved by his great army... and by its great might it cannot save.” The psalmist tells us that only God is our savior and prays, “Our soul waits for the Lord; (God) is our help and shield... Let your steadfast love, O Lord, be upon us, even as we hope in you.” In other words, in God we trust!

Luke 12:32-40

That’s basically what Jesus is telling his disciples in our gospel lesson, “Do not be afraid, little flock, for it is your Father’s good pleasure to give you the kingdom... For where your treasure is, there your heart will be also.” That’s what Jesus taught us last week when he told the parable of the rich man who built huge storage houses and thought he could eat, drink, and be happy for the rest of his life, not realizing that he would die that very night. That’s why Jesus tells us that where your treasure is, there your heart will be also. But, we need to be mindful not to read our lesson too literally. I’m pretty sure that Luke is encouraging his church to be generous in their financial stewardship so that the entire faith community could prosper. That’s why he immediately tells us to be ready because we don’t know when Jesus will return. But, being ready for Jesus to return doesn’t mean that we should panic. We should be living as though Jesus is here right now. As that old story about when St. Augustine was planting a tree in his monastery’s garden reminds us, a young novice came to Augustine and asked him, “If you knew Jesus were coming today, what would you do?” Augustine smiled and said, “I’d be planting a tree.” In other words, if we knew Jesus was coming, we shouldn’t have to change anything because the way we are living today would be as though Jesus were coming right now. Paul answered this question directly in 1 Thessalonians 4. Paul said that, as the day of the Lord approaches, believers are to “aspire to live quietly, and to mind [their] own affairs, and to work with [their] hands.” So, if we’re lounging in front of the TV eating potato chips and sipping Diet Coke, is that being prepared for Jesus’ return? Or, if we’re berating and calling others vile names and shouting profanities at those who don’t agree with us, would Jesus think that’s how his kingdom will come? If we knew Jesus was returning today, what would we be doing?

Hebrews 11:1-3, The Call and the Challenge

So, the unknown writer of our lesson from Hebrews tells us right before our epistle lesson, "But we are not among those who shrink back and so are lost, but among those who have faith and so are saved..." While we wait for Jesus to return, we aren't supposed to sit idly by and shrink back, we are to be Christ's Body in this troubled world. As Martin Luther summarized "faith alone justifies, but the faith that justifies is never alone." In other words, while salvation is received through faith in Christ, that saving faith will inevitably produce good works as a natural consequence. These works are not the cause of salvation, but rather the evidence and fruit of a genuine faith. Our lesson teaches us, "Now faith is the assurance of things hoped for, the conviction of things not seen. Indeed, by faith our ancestors received approval. By faith we understand that the worlds were prepared by the word of God, so that what is seen was made from things that are not visible." Western theology makes some of us think that Christians have to prove that God exists and no one has adequately provided such a proof. But, neither has the skeptic been able to prove that God does not exist. As God told Moses in the Burning Bush, "I AM WHO I AM." When the BBC reporter, John Freeman, asked the famed Swiss psychiatrist and psychotherapist, Dr. Carl Jung, in a 1959 interview, "Do you now believe in God?" Jung answered, "*I know*. I don't need to believe. I know." Faith is knowing, the assurance of things hoped for, the conviction of things not seen. If we could prove it, then it wouldn't be faith. Faith tells us that Jesus died; Jesus rose again; and Jesus will come again! So, in the presence of all the chaos and division, anger and discord, as our hymn challenges us, let us ever walk with Jesus and flee this world which would deceive us. While we share the pain of those who sorrow, let us share Christ's heavenly joy. Let us gladly live with Jesus since he's risen from the dead. Let us ever walk with Jesus and do the Father's bidding to proclaim light into the present darkness and heal the world's brokenness with hope and love.