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~ Luke 12:13-21 ~

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*Someone in the crowd said to [Jesus,] "Teacher, tell my brother to divide the family inheritance with me."*

*But he said to him, "Friend, who set me to be a judge or arbitrator over you?" And he said to them, "Take care! Be on your guard against all kinds of greed, for one's life does not consist in the abundance of possessions."*

*Then he told them a parable: "The land of a rich man produced abundantly. And he thought to himself, 'What should I do, for I have no place to store my crops?' Then he said, 'I will do this: I will pull down my barns and build larger ones, and there I will store all my grain and my goods. And I will say to my soul, Soul, you have ample goods laid up for many years; relax, eat, drink, be merry.'*

*But God said to him, 'You fool! This very night your life is being demanded of you. And the things you have prepared, whose will they be?'*

*So it is with those who store up treasures for themselves but are not rich toward God."*

~

Dear church, let me ask you a question – where have you seen God this week?

Where have you seen God?

To put it, perhaps, another way:

When have your ears filled with the good news?

When have your eyes beheld divine beauty?

When have your feet walked upon holy soil?

When have your fingers touched blessed creation?

When has your heart overflowed with joy?

Where have you seen God this week?

I ask these questions because I think (whether we're comfortable admitting it or not) I think it's actually quite easy to miss seeing God as we tend to the busyness of our daily lives.

As a church – it's easy to get caught up in the day-to-day tasks necessary to keep the lawn mowed... the lights on... the water running... and the bills paid. As people – it's understandable that we need to race from work... to appointments... to home... and back to work again. And that's not to diminish any of these aspects of life or ministry – they are important! But I also think it's important to remind ourselves – and to remind one another – that God has this resilient tendency of showing up at the moments...and in the places – when and where we least expect God to be.

Places like a council meeting which has run on for way too long.

Places like a parking lot where we wait while we decide whether we have the strength to step inside.

Places like a hospital waiting room where we worry the answer will be the one we'd prefer not to hear.

Places like a quiet street upon which we walk after having been turned away or forgotten.

Places that do not seem holy or sacred. Places, let's face it, where we often don't want God to be.

And yet – that's precisely where our ears, eyes, feet, fingers, hearts and lives often encounter the divine! That's where God has the uncanny tendency of revealing God's self!

[PAUSE] And God seems determined to keep showing up in such places. After all – that's the promise: that nothing...neither death, nor life, nor angels, nor rulers, nor fear, nor height, nor depth... can separate us from the love of God! Nothing. Not even the grave.

God keeps showing up!

Maybe that's why all these stories which make up the Season after Pentecost –filled with wonderful parables and lessons are some of my favourites in scripture! Now... I must confess that we preachers have a long history of over-romanticizing these texts. We like to pick out the preachy parts and run with them. And I get it! There are plenty of snippets worth highlighting.

But what occurs to me – is that these stories are more deeply rooted in our human experience than we often recognize them as being.

These are stories about disciples searching for a promise in the midst of angst.

Stories of followers aching for a word of hope in a world filled with worry.

Stories about the need to share wealth and re-focus on that which is truly important.

Stories of friends searching for a glimpse of God... all in the hopes that they may come to taste, and see, and believe that the Lord is, indeed, good.

These are deeply human... and very familiar experiences.

They certainly resonate with me. And I suspect the same may be true for you, as well.

But notice... that these stories didn't occur on some mountain-top nor did they happen in some great temple.

The people in these stories weren't better... or more important... or more deserving... or more holy than you or I.

They were just walking... or working... or talking... or fishing. They had fears about the future... they were worried about the ministry they had invested so much of their lives into...and they were questioning what steps they should take next!

Sounds a little familiar, doesn't it?

And yet it's into those fears... and amidst those worries... and surrounded by those questions... that God chose to reveal God's self through the Spirit.

It was there that God stepped into the story.

It was then that God joined God's people on the road.

They're kind of like the biblical versions of the parking lot or hospital waiting room through which God also steps into our stories.

It's the ancient world's version of the council table, or quiet abandoned street onto which God comes alongside our narrative.

It's something so very routine and normative – made holy and sacred – all because God couldn't be kept out of this story... God couldn't be kept away from God's people... and God's love couldn't be contained by the tomb.

Because that's the good news.

And so, let me ask you again – let me return to my original question – where did you see God this week? It's a rhetorical question – but take a moment to think about it. When did the Spirit show up... for you?

For me –

I saw God while driving my son to school...during which he asked me questions about a worry that had been occupying his ten-year-old mind.

I saw God as I tried to rush through the checkout line and was forced to slow down by someone who took the time to ask me how I was doing today.

I saw God in the face of a young person I had coffee with who was calling for long-overdue change in the church.

I saw God in the face of an 85-year-old man who marched in the Toronto Pride Parade with his church for the very first time.

And I see God in the faces that make up this church... however and wherever you're gathered today.

These, beloved children of God, are the steps we take along our own modern-day discipleship journey! And while the streets of our cities, towns and villages may look a tad different than those of the ancient Middle East... rest assured that our God's promised presence remains the same. As one of my favourite prayers from our hymnbook reminds us – we may not always know where we're going, but only that God's hand is leading us.

God was here yesterday.

God is here today.

And God's promised Spirit will remain with you tomorrow.

Do not be afraid!

May the next steps we take, be taken in faith of the one who promises to journey by our side, each and every step of the way. May your ministry be filled with joyful exploration and heartfelt service. And may we feel the Spirit's presence, lifting our hearts, stirring our imaginations, and calming our souls as we journey into the days ahead.

For this and for you I say, thanks be to God.

*Amen.*