**The Joy of Serving!  August 7, 2016**

**Luke 12: 32-40 Pr. H. Adachi**

May the Lord’s Grace and Peace be poured into people’s hearts in this sanctuary.

My grandmother was an interesting Christian believer who often said things that didn’t seem to make sense. She enjoyed cooking and served us, grandchildren, saying eat more and more. She was living with my uncle’s family when I was in elementary school, but she often visited my father’s home, too.

During hot summer nights, she slept with the door opened and only a lockless screen door between her and the outside world. I asked her, “Grandma, if you sleep with only screen door closed, it is easy for a thief to come in. What would you do when he comes in?”

Then she answered, “No worries, if a thief comes, I would say, “Welcome, although there is nothing for you to steal tonight, there is a cold beer and also tasty food that goes well with the beer. So why don’t you come in?” When I thought deeper about this possible incident, I wondered how the thief, who was welcomed, would react to her. To a child’s mind it didn’t make sense.

Now let’s dive into the Gospel text, Luke 12:32-40. There are a couple of parables in the latter part of the text. One of them doesn’t really make sense. Let me talk about the latter one which, I think, makes more sense. I’m referring to the last two verses where the owner of the house would not let a thief come in if he knows what time the thief would arrive.

Therefore, Jesus concluded, like the owner of a house would be always cautious, in order to be ready for a thief that comes unexpectedly. It is common sense advice, unlike my grandma who welcomes the thief.

So now let’s look at the other parable, which is verses 36 through 38. This is the parable of slaves who wait for their master who would return unexpectedly. Since this was the time people did not have telephones, cell phones or, of course, wireless technology; they would not know when the master returns, so they should be ready whenever the master comes back in order to serve him immediately.

However, verse 37 is a strange verse, because rather than the slaves to serve the master, he will fasten his belt and have them sit down to eat, and he will come and serve them. This is opposite of common practice and doesn’t make sense in the context of Jesus’ time.

In both parables, what does it mean when Jesus said “their master returns” or “the Son of Man is coming”? People interpret this as the time when the world ends or the time each individual ends his/her earthly life.

When we think about the time Jesus came to this world, the people who listened to his teachings were Jews who had been taught the law was everything. So for them the end of the world or the end of one’s life would be the time of judgement. So people were afraid of the time of judgement. However, Jesus was trying to explain using these parables to be ready for the time your master, the Lord, God, who will serve you rather than judge you.

Today’s Gospel started with the Word of Jesus, “Do not be afraid, little flock.” Jesus encourages us rather than telling us to be afraid facing the end of our earthly life, just be hopeful and be ready for the time Jesus will serve you. He told the disciples rather than he expected to be served, he would serve others. I believe it is important to reflect very deeply upon the meaning of Jesus’ intentions. For us, human beings, not just being joyful to be served by the Lord, but to understand deeply that Jesus is joyful in his service to others.

Today, in the 21st century, through this worship, Jesus is telling us that he himself will fasten his belt and let us sit around him and joyfully serve us. In English, we call this moment “Sunday Service.” People may interpret that this is the time we, human beings, should serve the Lord, our God. That understanding is not wrong, but there is also a meaning that the Lord brings heaven in advance, so to speak, and God serves humans joyfully.

Today when we ponder God’s joy to serve, is our faith to believe in God’s Word changed a little bit? Even though we say our future may not be hopeful, especially these days, I am sorry but, I understand that there are people who want Trump to be the President, but at the same time…I often hear from many immigrants that if Trump becomes President of the United States, this is the end and they will leave this country. Whatever happens in this uncertain time, we, as Christians, should be hopeful and joyfully serve each other and the Lord, who says with eager joyfulness “Do not be afraid a little flock. I will serve you.” Amen.