**Hear the gospel of our Lord Jesus Christ According to Luke….**

**32Jesus said, ‘Do not be afraid, little flock, for your Father has been pleased to give you the kingdom. 33Sell your possessions and give to the poor. Provide purses for yourselves that will not wear out, a treasure in heaven that will never fail, where no thief comes near and no moth destroys. 34For where your treasure is, there your heart will be also.**

**35‘Be dressed ready for service and keep your lamps burning, 36like servants waiting for their master to return from a wedding banquet, so that when he comes and knocks, they can immediately open the door for him.  37It will be good for those servants whose master finds them watching when he comes.**

**Truly I tell you, he will dress himself to serve, will make them recline at the table and will come and wait on them.  38It will be good for those servants whose master finds them ready, even if he comes in the middle of the night or towards daybreak.  39But understand this: if the owner of the house had known at what hour the thief was coming, he would not have let his house be broken into. 40You also must be ready, because the Son of Man will come at an hour when you do not expect him.’**

**This is the Gospel of the Lord….**

**Make God Happy – Give Your BMW to me.**

I want us to imagine for a few minutes this morning that we have become a fly on the wall of some good friends of ours, privileged to watch the interactions of their daily lives. Think of it as “reality TV” among friends.

At first, everything seems quite normal, but it’s the conversation at the dinner table that catches us by surprise. We’re simply amazed by what we hear the parents saying to their children.

**Mum speaks first:**

 “Children, we know that fruits and vegetables are probably good for you, but we have decided to let you eat pudding first, and if you don’t want to eat the broccoli, that’s OK with us.”

**And then the dad speaks;**

“And we’ve sold your bicycle helmets, and we have removed the life jackets from the boat, and you don’t have to wear your seatbelts in the car anymore.”

Just when you think you’ve heard it all, **mum speaks again,**

“When school starts in September, homework will not be allowed in this home, and bedtime is whenever you choose.”

The kids begin to cheer, but it’s not over yet. **Dad says**

“And that thing about brushing your teeth, and changing your underwear, and going to Sunday school, and tidying your rooms; it’s all overrated! **You don’t have to do any of that stuff anymore.”**

And the last scene we see before turning off the television is these two little kids jumping up from their seats, grabbing their father’s power tools and running with scissors in their hands as they go outside to play in the street.

**We’re speechless!** We had no idea this was going on in the home of our best friends. We thought we knew them well,

**But what if it is all true?** Then we’re not sure we want to be associated with them anymore.

The story I just described for you is obviously fiction. I made it all up. But what if it **was** true? That someone you knew very, very well, turned out to be a radical troublemaker, whose ideas were so out of the mainstream and so contrary to what you believed, **that he might even be dangerous?**

If you can wrap your brain around that unlikely possibility – that someone you know well could do and say things that sounded so bizarre then you begin to get a picture of Jesus in first century Israel.

He was the one who was supposed to be the Messiah, the one who would show up and slay the enemy, and provide peace and prosperity for the Jews, and rule the Kingdom with an iron fist. But then one day, this Messiah **does** come, and he is saying things that defy what every self-respecting Jew ever believed. **This Jesus says things like**:

* **I did not come to bring peace, but a sword.**
* **There is no difference between Jews and Greeks; slaves and their masters.**
* **I have come to comfort the afflicted…and afflict the comfortable.**
* **If you love me, you will hate your mother and father, sister and brother.**
* **Love your enemies; don’t hate them, love them, and**
* **Sell your possessions and give the money to the poor**

If you have ever wondered why Jesus was so unpopular with the Jewish mainstream of his day, **this is why.** He turned their values upside-down and replaced them with radical ideas.

* **The first shall be last,**
* **the slave shall be free,**
* **the poor shall be rich.**

Twenty centuries later, we read what Jesus said and did, and we say “Quite right, Jesus! You really gave it to those pious Jews. Good for you.”

**But what we fail to realize is that the message of Jesus has not changed in 2000 years, except now he is speaking to us.**

* Today, **we** are the wealthy and the proud.
* Today, **we** are the ones who are comfortable in our religion and separated from those who are the sinners.
* Today, we are the ones who believe that Jesus is
“**for us**” and therefore “**against them**.”

We assume that the words cannot be for us. There must be an error in translation from Greek to English. Jesus didn’t really mean what he said.

It has been said that Christians in this century **“grind the words of Jesus to fit our circumstances.”**

* Are we **really supposed** to sell our possessions and give the money to the poor?
* Are we **really supposed** to visit the sick, the imprisoned and the poor?
* Are we really supposed to choose to be last in line as servant leaders?

But what if we are? **What if we really are**?

These are known as “**the hard sayings of Jesus**”. They might not be comfortable for us but we must try to understand the values that **Jesus** holds before they can ever become **our values.**

Now, it doesn’t help that we begin with the first of these sayings, which has to do with our possessions. The text we read a moment ago starts out nicely enough

When Jesus said, **“Do not be afraid, little flock, for it is your Father’s good pleasure to give you the kingdom.”**

He calls us his flock, his little lambs, and he tells us that we don’t have to be afraid of God because God wants to give us a gift. We don’t earn our way into the Kingdom; we don’t get there by doing good works. It is his gift to us, free and unmerited.

But in the very next verse, Jesus hammers us!

**“You’re to sell your possessions and give the money away.”**

In another gospel, he says it this way;

**“If anyone wants to be my disciple, let them sell everything they own, give the money to the poor, take up their cross and follow me.”**

What happened **to “have no fear, little flock”?** Surely, he could not possibly have meant us to take that literally!

Surely, he did not mean that we should give away our homes, our bank accounts, our snowmobiles, and our season tickets, and live in poverty.

**We begin to grind it to fit.** We begin to think that Jesus meant that we are expected to share **a little bit** with those who have less than us. We may even give sacrificially so that the church can build a new Community Center, or so that children in Africa can attend school.

But what if Jesus meant it literally? What if he truly meant that we cannot have two masters, and that if we worship money, we cannot worship him. What do we do with a command as radical as that?

**And it gets worse!**

Jesus tells us always to be ready, like servants whose master finds them watching when he comes home. One day, when we least expect it, Jesus will return in glory to judge the living and the dead. Will we be ready for that judgement?

This talk is entitled “**Make God Happy; Give Your BMW to Me!”** If you happen to own a BMW, you are probably feeling pretty picked on by now so let’s expand the target.

* “If you want to make God happy, give your silver Lamborghini convertible to me!”
* or “If you want to make God happy, give away your white Mercedes.”
* or “If you want to make God happy, give all your toys to the children of Tanzania.”

This is one of those verses of scripture that we refuse to interpret literally. When it comes to the verses where Jesus tells us to give away everything we **own -** we want to grind that verse to fit.

**I do it, you do it. We all do it.**

**What are the choices that we have?**

* One is to play with the words of Jesus; to twist them and make them palatable to our lives.
* Another possibility would be, strictly and rigidly, to follow every command and every call of Jesus. It might be nearly impossible to do, and no one in human history has ever been successful at it, but we could try….
* **There is a third possibility**; in fact, it’s not just a possibility. I think it is the **reality** where most of us are.

We **could** admit that Jesus meant everything he said in scripture, and he truly calls us to **obey**, but we are sinners and we’ve said “**no**.” And further, we confess this sinfulness to God, and ask him to forgive us…**again and again, forgive us**. And God, in his **amazing grace** says this:

**“Have no fear, little flock. Have no fear, little flock. For your Father has chosen to give you the Kingdom.**

**Have no fear, little flock.”**

We are people on a **journey**. The rules are **real**. The hard sayings of Jesus in scripture are not figures of speech, but rather, calls **to obedience**.

Jesus **takes** us just the way we are, but he is not content to **leave** us the way we are. So, he challenges us over a **lifetime** to serve him, not out of **legalism**, but out of **love**. And one day, all of us will be rid of our possessions and safely in **God’s Kingdom**. Until that day, we seek to be honest with ourselves and honest with God about our sin…and trust that he is still gracious.

Let us pray:

**JESUS TAKE ME AS I AM,**

**I can come no other way.**

**Take me deeper into You,**

**Make my flesh life melt away.**

**Make me like a precious stone,**

**Crystal clear and finely honed,**

**Life of Jesus shining through,**

**Giving glory back to You.**

Amen