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## *Don't Worry, Be Ready*

**A sermon by Canon Lauren Holder**  
**Proper 14 – Year C**

When I was a child, I took ballet, tap and jazz—which I think was a requirement of all young girls in Texas. I don't remember much about the classes; I was always more interested in gymnastics. But I do remember my first (perhaps only?) jazz dance recital. We dressed as clowns and danced to the tune of "Don't Worry, Be Happy." Maybe it was the clown costume that turned me off dance. But the music and even some of the choreography for "Don't Worry, Be Happy" came rushing back into my brain as I read the Gospel for this week. Jesus covers a lot of ground in three paragraphs—there's a lot to unpack—but the bookends of the passage are "don't worry" and "be ready." Perhaps being ready is the key to happiness.

I remember learning at some point that the two topics Jesus talks about the most in our Holy Scriptures are first: the kingdom of God, and second: money. We get both in the opening to this passage. "Don't be afraid, little flock—for God will give you the kingdom. Sell your possessions and give alms." Check and check. And then we hear the familiar words: "For where your treasure is, there your heart will be also."

Jesus then moves toward images of being ready, none of which resonate with me too much—lamps, slaves, masters... so I made a list of modern day readiness metaphors:

The runner who lays out his clothes, shoes, and hat the night before the big race, bib pinned to the shirt and ready to go. And if that runner is a millennial, taking a picture of the setup so all of Instagram will know it's go-time.

Similarly, the kids who will set their clothes out tonight for the first day of school tomorrow, going to bed with lunches and backpacks ready to go.

The expectant mother who drives into work every day with her "go-bag" in the trunk—just in case the baby decides to come early.

Colin Kaepernick working out every day for the past 889 days just in case an NFL owner decides to hire him.

An understudy learning the part for a play she may never get to be in.

The young mom with Stage IV colon cancer writing letters to her daughters to be opened on the day of her death, their graduations, their weddings, and all the milestones she'll miss.

This is what it looks like to be ready. It looks like preparing ourselves.

And you know what can take away from the time and thoughtfulness needed to prepare ourselves? Constantly tending to our stuff. Really—the more stuff we have, the more upkeep. The more clutter and the more maintenance. We forget to make an appointment with our dentist because the check-engine light is on in our car begging to be addressed. We fail to sit in the backyard and give thanks for God's creation because we're too busy mowing the lawn and pulling weeds. The cup of tea we made to enjoy while reading scripture grows cold because the washing machine just buzzed to remind us about all

the laundry that needs to be dried, folded, and put away.

It gives new meaning to the adage, “To whom much is given, much will be required.” Generally that statement is used as a call to altruism and social responsibility. But practically speaking, the more you have, the more time and effort you lose in caring for it. Stuff is sneaky. Stuff is the thief in the night. Stuff is what robs us.

I think when Jesus says, “where your treasure is, there your heart will be also,” we often hear it as a condemnation. But we need to hear it as an invitation! And invitation to more! More time, more meaning, more relationship, more understanding, more love.

I want to suggest a little experiment. I’m sure you’ve heard the concept of a spending freeze—when only the bills get paid, but no extra expenses are allowed for. I know some people who instead call this a spending fast—and use it as a spiritual practice for a month or a season, like Lent. We’ve done this in our home before, when we’ve said “no eating out for a month” or “no buying coffee when we can make it at home.”

Choose something you spend money on regularly that isn’t truly a NEED. You know yourself. And choose a timeline, two weeks or more. It’s a self-learning exercise in and of itself, but I want you to take it a step further. Take the money that you would have spent on *whatever*, and spend it on *change* instead. Take the money you would have spent on eating out, and give it to the members of St. Anne’s Guild in the halls this month collecting funds for BCM’s pantry to feed our food-insecure neighbors. Donate your season tickets to music or sporting events to a foster family, doing their best to care for each other and the world. Walk or ride your bike to work so you can spend your gas money on MARTA cards for some of our unemployed neighbors needing to get to a job interview. Wear that go-to dress for one more season of weddings so you can donate a beautiful gown to a high schooler who can’t afford the senior prom. To give you a personal example, Jay and I were thrilled when our childcare expenses decreased slightly this year, because it meant we could increase our giving to a school providing quality education to children experiencing homelessness here in Atlanta.

What is your treasure? What do you love? Let that inform your giving, so that what you love expands. Don’t make an idol of your treasure, but share it. Don’t diminish your treasure by clinging to it from a place of scarcity and fear, but share your treasure so that it expands. I truly believe this will eliminate some of the anxiety any of us can feel about money, while also making us more ready to see the kingdom of God coming near.

Don’t worry, be ready.