

**Lessons for Twelfth Sunday after Pentecost**

**August 7, 2016**

Psalm 33:12-22 (*antiphon: v. 20*) ~ *A hymn of praise to God for his protection for the people he has chosen.*

Genesis 15:1-6 ~ *God renewed His promise of many descendants to Abram and gave the stars as a sign.*

Hebrews 11:1-16 ~ *Old Testament people of God trusted His promises and received a heavenly city by faith.*

Luke 12:22-34 (35-40) ~ *Jesus urged the disciples to trust God to provide for their needs and His Kingdom.*

**GATHERING THE TEXTS: Keeping Faith Things First**

In spite of strong evidence to the contrary, when God promised Abraham that he would father a son and a great nation, Abraham believed and was counted righteous. From Abel and Enoch and Noah to Abraham, Sarah, and Jacob, the people of God made sense of their world as they trusted in God to protect and provide for them in all things. Jesus assured his followers that when God and the grace of his kingdom are first in our lives, all the things we need for daily life will seem like bonuses instead of necessities that we have to struggle to acquire.

**PRAYER BEFORE THE SERVICE:** Gracious God, you have created this world with its marvelous variety; you preserve it according to your laws of nature! Thank you for the Spirit's call to faith and the greater wisdom that you provide all who fear, love, and trust in you above all things. Amen.

**STEWARDSHIP THOUGHT:** The way we use our time and possessions reflects our trust or lack of trust in God, who is the provider of all things. If we are wasteful, it indicates that we don't appreciate God's gifts; if we are miserly, it shows that we don't trust God and think we have to provide for ourselves. Trust in God moves us to use material goods and the time God has given, in ways that bring blessings of faith and life to others.

**OFFERING PRAYER:** The things we see, O Lord, are very real,  
But even more, Your promises are true!  
We seek Your blessing now upon these gifts  
That they may turn more hearts and lives to You. Amen.

**CONVICTION AND COMFORT:** We think a reward in hand is worth more than two promises of things to come, but that is not so with God. A single word of God, promising blessings in this world and life in the world to come, calls for faith that clings to things unseen. When we hold to the things of this world we risk losing much greater blessings. In Christ, God has prepared an eternal city for us, an inheritance among the saints, numbering more than the stars of the heavens.