

Scripture:  
Hebrews 11:1-3,8-16  
Luke 12:32-40

### **Sabbatical Rediscoveries**

I lost my wallet for a brief period of time this week. So briefly in fact I'm pretty sure it wasn't even an hour gone by but it made me feel an anxiety I hadn't felt in a long time. You see I was back to work but I was struggling for childcare and I hadn't had to pack a lunch for the kids to take to school or childcare for a few weeks and when I went to do it I realized we had to make an early morning trip to the grocery store before I got the girls dropped off. I did not like the sudden rushed feeling that was coming back right away. In the back of my mind I wanted to just stop it all. I couldn't though so I packed the girls into the car we did a quick grocery trip (I only had to murmur "get along" a couple times under my breath it was fairly successful. I got home, packed up some lunches and packed everyone back into the car and we were on our way - until I couldn't find my wallet. Of course I briefly blamed the children for my loosing it because they were arguing as we got into the car about who gets to get into the car first (It is very important you know) and so clearly it was there doing that I must have left my wallet in the shopping cart. The worry and the anxiety flooded - panic ensued and we raced back to the store only to find that the moment I walked in looking frenzied the clerk said "you?" And I said "lost my wallet" and she said "I hope this is yours and I said yes" and I started to breathe again. Now here is the thing I know in the scheme of life that is not much of a story but I'm sure it is one you can relate to. The relaxing calm life suddenly thrown into a rush that it feels like you can't control. When in fact most of the time you can control your reactions but sometimes we forget that in the heat of the moment.

Last Sunday did a bit of a reflection on my sabbatical and with the powerpoint not working a few people said - do it again so I will. As I have been back for a week I think I might need a reminder too and in fact at the end of my work day on Friday I pulled out the camera and took a look back over my time and thought if you don't begrudge me I might share a bit more with you.

Matthew tells us Do not be afraid, little flock, for it is your Father's good pleasure to give you the kingdom. And do not worry about your life, what you will eat or what you will drink,<sup>[a]</sup> or about your body, what you will wear. Is not life more than food, and the body more than clothing? Look at the birds of the air; they neither sow nor reap nor gather into barns, and yet your heavenly Father feeds them. Are you not of more value than they? And can any of you by worrying add a single hour to your span of life?<sup>[b]</sup> and Hebrews says Now faith is the assurance of things hoped for, the conviction of things not seen.

Which That Hanh said "We are much better at preparing to live than at living"

All of these are worth reflecting on. When we spend all of our time looking ahead, worrying about the future we sometimes stop living and stop recognizing what we have. I began my sabbatical by going to an amazing conference. I think next year a whole team of us should go to the Inhabit conference in Seattle I find it so uplifting and inspiring, if I could bring it to us I would. But at this conference I bought four books (as one does when they go to an inspiring conference). I was going to read all of them on my sabbatical and come back to you full of new knowledge and wisdom. I read one chapter of one of the books on the first morning after the conference while I waited for others to get packed up to go home. I read the first chapter of another book on the plane on the way to the Philippines and.... That's it. Something clicked in me when I landed in Manila - maybe it was the heat or the exhaustion or the beautiful sunrise but I knew it was time to stop preparing for something to come and live into exactly what was directly there with me.

See I can be really at work too much hoping one day I will have the time to live again. So the focus of my sabbatical quickly became about relearning to live in the moment and very little about preparing for the future. It is not the preparing for the future is a bad thing in fact we must so that we are not consumed with worry or we don't one day simply come up empty handed but you know as well as I do that no amount of preparing solidifies the results.

So my sabbatical became more of a sabbath. Not in a way that I got a whole lot better at prayer and meditation but I got slightly better at letting myself play with my kids and play in the sand and rest. See it is not that I don't try to practice what I preach - in fact I do. Jesus is always in the process of teaching and modelling for his disciples the kind of behaviours and practices that constitute a God-centred life. The goal of life is interdependence rather than independence and self-reliance. Faith is to bring us calm and resolve it is being sure that something is ahead of us as we are faithful to do our best living. For where your treasure is, there your heart will be also. In the last three months I spent a lot of time appreciating the treasures I have and refilling my heart with appreciation. I began to remember the steadfast love of the lord and what it looks like. -It looks like cousins rediscovering each other and overcoming cultural and language barriers with hardly a pause.

-It looks like a mother and son reconnecting after too much distance

- It looks like kids thinking it is an amazing thing to blow up a pool in the tiniest of spaces and still cherish every moment together. (I love these photos so much)

In the last few months I have attempted to reconnect with the notion that we/I must <sup>2</sup>Set my mind on things that are above, not on things that are on earth, that has looked different than I expected.

- Of course it is easy to appreciate when you are in places like this but lets be honest we do live in a beautiful place like this.

Rediscovering abundant life and God's love was found in

- It has been appreciation of butterflies and dragonflies while floating in a hidden tropical paradise.

- It is going back to the place where your partner grew up and meeting family and friends on the other side of the world.

- It has been offering opportunities for others that they just might not get as often as we might.

- I spent time releasing some of the worry and exhaustion that had piled up by enjoying time in paradise with family and friends

And then we came home and I really got to practice. To practice these things in my own home and in my own life away from the excitement of being away was when the real test began. Well actually the real test did begin this week and that brought me right back to this reflection with more photos and more memories that both warmed my heart and reminded me of all I have. I have sunk into gratitude quickly. I know that life is hard. When you go to a beautiful, exotic place like the Philippines and you live in the midst of real life there you are very quickly reminded how much easier life is in Canada. My girls both want to move to the Philippines but even their father wants to be here in Canada where life for us is relatively easy and from a distance we can help people at home even just a little. See here in Canada our biggest struggle this week was going 2.5 weeks with out a washer and dryer because it died and we had to order a new one (most people don't in the Philippines only dream of having a washer and certainly not a dryer). I have met and know of people this week who are struggling just to survive because life hasn't dealt them the best cards. I say that because I don't want to sound trite - I know we will worry and I know we will need to prepare for life ahead of us but the reality is Jesus is always about lifting up what really matters, and it isn't possessions and fat bank accounts. Jesus does not condemn wealth; he get frustrated by how it is misused and abused. Jesus is always about us living rather than just "preparing to live" Its about living focussed on faith and hope. "By faith Abraham obeyed... By faith he stayed... By faith he received..." - Hebrews 11:8-11 (NRSV)

"The writer of Hebrews is on a roll. He is working himself up to make a point, and it's a good one: This blessed path we call life is made by putting one foot in front of the other and taking one risky leap after another—in faith, without a net. Every time we say "yes" to hope, life starts over again. Whenever we trust the power of love, an entirely different future begins to take shape. Greatness becomes possible when we are willing to become fools.

There are no guarantees, of course. That's what makes it faith. Still, history suggests that God is faithful even when we are not, that miracles can happen even after we've laughed in God's face. The road that got us here was paved by flawed people who trusted God's promise of life abundant. By faith they had received a vision of another, better world, and so they kept going even when they could not see the way forward."<sup>1</sup>

So in the last couple of months I've sat and talked with friends while our kids played and I've been swimming and I've had time to make healthy dinners and I've gotten to know myself again a bit. I needed to take time for all of those things.

Oh and I won a few medals while paddling some dragon boat.

And had a birthday party and made a cake and discovered Dairy Queen (oh no Dairy Queen).

As I mentioned last week it took me two months to check in on one of my goals and that was take some naps. I took a few in the last months. I was amazed at how tired I was. I thought after a few weeks off I would be rested and well - what I discovered is that when you don't stop and when you get out of focus you've got some naps to catch up on. I plan to keep that in practice every once and awhile.

The August long weekend is over and I know we are all ramping back up into September but I want us to go into this year celebrating all the ways we can live into God's intent for our lives?

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<sup>1</sup> We've Come This Far. Vicki Kemper Still Speaking Devotional August 11, 2019

How about lifting up a model of stewardship of all of life—of time, talent, and treasure—and the blessings and joys of interdependence and mutuality. Let's be encouraged as disciples to really live our one precious life as if every breath, every decision, every action and every second matters. You see, the truth is that it all does matter. All that we are, have, and do are in service to the one thing that really matters, and that one thing is that we fill the entirety of our lives that in themselves are a God given gift. Worry less, live more.

And then perhaps I can encourage you to “Take a moment today to remember and give thanks for your heroes in faith, both the ancestors who made your sweet life possible and the current companions who inspire you every day. Take another moment to recall the twists and turns in your own journey, taking special note of what happened when you risked everything, and how that ever-unspooling thread of grace kept pulling you forward.

With that in mind, consider again the challenges ahead. Trusting in what is yet unseen, resolve to run the race with perseverance and hope and love.

May you all find joy in the journey, experience miracles in life's moments, and take delight in holding loosely to all boundless blessings and goodness of God.