

Too much information

Too Few Words

The result?

the “Deer in the Headlights” look... *or...*

I’m sorry... Were you saying something?

Understanding breaks down... And not just in the 21st century...

Today’s gospel lesson. *197 words. Two minutes.*

Drinking from the fire hose

Let me break it down... into bite size pieces.

Don’t be afraid.

God wants to give you everything

So sell your possessions

And then give the money away

Secure and protect the rest.

Always be prepared

So Jesus’ first point is...

Do not be afraid, little flock,

for it is your Father's good pleasure to give you the kingdom.

And since God is the creator of... well everything...

He can certainly give us... well *everything!*

But do we really want *everything?*

Or do we just want... what *we* want?

One of Soren Kierkegaard’s favorite stories is about an emperor, touring his empire, soaking up the accolades.

When he rolled into one village, his carriage was surrounded.

A brash young farmer cried out...

Show me your favor, Sire. Grant me a special blessing.

The emperor's response... was shocking!

Of course, my good man. Get into my carriage. Come with me.

Live in my palace. Eat at my table. Marry my daughter.

You will be my son-in-law.

He was *elated!* until he realized...

No more Saturday nights at the pub with friends.

No more casual clothes.

Stay dressed up all the time.

Take a bath... maybe every week.

Clean the fingernails.

Learn the *manners* of court.

He shook his head and lowered his eyes.

No, Sire, I would be too uncomfortable.

It would pull me out of my comfortable customs.

It would be too hard to live up to.

It would take too much of me.

If you really want to do something for me,

give me a plot of ground, a farm, a house of my own...

*Living in your palace, eating at your table, becoming your son-in-law,
this is just too much.*

So he declined.

He wanted the emperor's blessing... on *his* terms.

It can happen to us...

We commit to a narrow understanding of God
and can't even imagine what a divine blessing looks like

God offers us things *beyond* human understanding
But limiting our possibilities... without even trying...
Well... we can end up like that peasant farmer...
offered greatness beyond his wildest imagination
decides... *There must be something wrong with it...*
and *refused*... a magnificent opportunity

No need to experience unknown greatness
Not when average is so... comfortable

Now... for Jesus' second point...
Sell your possessions, and give alms.
Make purses for yourselves that do not wear out,
an unfailing treasure in heaven,
where no thief comes near and no moth destroys.

There is a legend about the apostle Thomas during his time in India.
The local king hired Thomas to build him a new palace.
Gave him money to buy materials and hire workmen.
But Thomas... gave the money to the poor...
And kept assuring the king... the new palace is rising steadily.

The king became suspicious...
Thomas never showed his progress...
Fed up with his excuses... he called him on the carpet!
Have you built my Palace?

Yes

Then I want to go see it... right now...
You can't see it now, but when you depart this life you'll see it.
I built you a palace in heaven
by giving your money to the poor and needy of your kingdom.

The King was furious! Threw Thomas into prison.
 stewing over how to execute that embezzler.
 He decided to flay him and then light him on fire.

But that night... the king's brother died
 and the king's brother *saw* the magnificent new palace in heaven...
 Built by Thomas' charitable work... with the king's money.
 The brother pleaded to return to earth
 and his dead body was suddenly revived.

His brother... the king... was right there at his bedside...
 And he told him all about the magnificent palace awaiting him in heaven.

The king released Thomas from prison...
 and both the king and his brother were baptized...
 and became followers of Jesus.

Thomas knew the truth
 The king did not
 Thomas understood laying up treasures in heaven
 The king did not
 But when he discovered... that God's promises... were *real!*
 He changed direction completely... Reversed his course...
 Became a believer... and shared the love of God in Christ
 throughout his earthly kingdom.

What about you?
 Why are you willing to lay up treasures in heaven?
 Or will you trust deadbolts, vaults and mothballs to protect you?
 Are you just being cautious? Or is it more serious?
 Jesus said...

For where your treasure is... there your heart will be also.

And... Jesus' third point

Be dressed for action and have your lamps lit

Be prepared... all the time...

get ready... right now...

Before Augustine was a bishop... before he was *Saint* Augustine.

He was a conscientious sinner.

He welcomed every pleasure... right or wrong... without remorse...

His mother prayed constantly... *Change his heart, O God.*

but Augustine partied on relentlessly...

One day... he finally broke down.

he sat with a friend sobbing over the state of his life.

At the peak of his misery, came a child's singing

A young voice from a nearby house.

The same words... over and over:

Pick it up, read it... pick it up, read it...

Augustine later described what happened next:

Immediately I ceased weeping

and began most earnestly to think

whether it was usual for children in some kind of game

to sing such a song,

but I could not remember ever having heard the like.

So, damming the torrent of my tears, I got to my feet,

for I could not but think that this was a divine command

to open the Bible and read the first passage I should light upon.

So I quickly returned to the bench where Alypius was sitting,

for there I had put down the apostles book.

I snatched it up, opened it,

and in silence read the paragraph on which my eyes first fell:

**Not in rioting and drunkenness, not in chambering and wantonness,
not in strife and envying, but put on the Lord Jesus Christ,
and make no provision for the flesh to fulfill the lust thereof.**

*I wanted to read no further, nor did I need to.
For instantly, as the sentence ended,
there was infused in my heart...
something like the light of full certainty
and all the gloom of doubt vanished away.*

No longer unprepared... He was ready...

Okay... that's fine for some ancient saint...
But what about *us*? How can *we* get ready?
Where can we find *light*... in *our* darkness?

Today's reading from Genesis...

Look toward heaven and count the stars, if you are able to count them.

The greatness of God... revealed to Abraham... *in darkness*
We can only *see* stars... *in the dark*...

I Josh Bales' song Count the Stars
The words are on this week's bulletin covers

*On my darkest night
a million beams of light
ask me to believe
that your promises
like a starlit sky
are bigger than my dreams
so in my doubting dark
I count the stars*