Pentecost 25 – Nov. 15, 2026 **Sermon** Pr. Lyndon Sayers

Matthew 25:14-30

The other day I booked an Evo car share to get from near the church to go check the lost and found at BC Transit. This car share program is new to me, which offers one-way trips. Typically I have used Modo, where you need to return the car to its original parking spot. Earlier this week I was travelling with a child and thought we may have left something on a city bus. Except the BC Transit office closes at 4 PM and I had less than a half hour to get there on time. The Evo car I booked was basically out of gas. The onboard computer stated it had 2 km of fuel left for driving. So I was obligated to fuel the car, for which I would be reimbursed, but that would take extra time. I put gas in the car and was ready to resume my trip when I tried the driver door handle and it was locked. I discovered too late I needed to select "continue trip" on the Evo app after turning off the car to maintain my booking running. Otherwise Evo assumed I had finished my booking and locked me out of the car, while it was parked at the gas station. No problem, I could just make a new booking on my phone. Except to my horror, I left my phone in the car. I quickly realize I am not going to make it to the BC Transit lost and found. I have a new crisis, getting back inside the car without a means to contact Evo customer service. I asked the gas station attendant if she could look up the phone number for Evo and if I could use the store phone. She obliges, flashes a number quickly to me on her phone, which I type in. Someone eventually picks up and this person tells me they can send someone over with roadside assistance but it will cost me money. At this point I am getting angry because it's their own negligence that the car was left with an empty tank. The person on the phone is baffled and asked whether I want roadside assistance or not. I asked them simply to unlock the door remotely. The person told me with some sarcasm, this would not be not possible. But I now for a fact that it is possible! Then he asked me what is the relative cost of my rental. Seemed like a strange question. I said about $5. He was incredulous. $5 for your rental! Yes, I replied. He said that was not possible.

Well I'm stuck at this gas station with their car that locked me out. I thought, just fix this already and stop arguing with me, I thought. Then slowly it dawned on me. I'm not talking to someone at Evo. I'm talking to someone at a traditional rental car company. I apologize and hang up. I ask the gas station attendant to look up the number again. This time she shows me the Evo website. I dial a toll free number based on letters. Perhaps I misdial and I get some kind of scammy healthcare company. Then I direct dial Evo, a third attempt. The recording politely suggests I message them on their app for quicker service. Not possible considering my phone is locked in their car. So I wait on hold and eventually a kind woman answers and unlocks the car door remotely which takes all of 1 minute, politely explaining that it was my own user error that led to my misfortune. And I am never exiting an Evo car again without having my phone with me. I continued on my way and I knew I was late. But I went to BC Transit just in case, but their office was closed. A case of not being prepared with enough fuel, with knowing how the app works.

The story about being late and losing track of time in 1 Thessalonians is dramatic for different reasons. Paul warns the Thessalonians not to fall asleep, not be caught driving a car share on empty and lock your phone in the car. Specifically Jesus warns disciples not to be caught unaware when the Son of God appears like a thief in the night. Wayne Turner, a friend and independent scholar, offers a helpful gloss on this passage to understand the end times language. Language that conservative evangelicals have appropriated that as Lutherans we need to correct some misunderstandings. The German philosopher Martin Heidegger comments that for Paul, the *parousia*, the second coming of Jesus, is not a literal question about *when*. It's not about a literal day and time when Jesus will return. But instead it's a question about *how*. A question about how we as followers of Jesus are keeping the time, how we are waiting. In particular it's about how we are *keeping the faith* in a time of waiting. The experience of being Christian in this world is one of keeping faith in the face of all of life's distractions, threats, violence, and misfortunes. Despite the fact there is war and violence around us. Despite the fact we are in a climate crisis and our government doesn't care.

Despite the fact that life isn't always easy. And yet the response of the Christian is to follow Christ. To be prepared as if he is returning tomorrow. To respond with love despite our tendencies to respond with anger and violence in return. In this sense faith is a matter of the German sense of "Trotz" [in spite] and resistance. We are the ones keeping the faith, following a higher power, while leaders bicker, stall, look out for their own careerism, do everything except look after the people. We are the ones called to look after one another, to look out for our neighbour.

This connection between Christian faith and resistance reveals the political nature of the Christian life. Not political as in partisan. But political as acting in the world with and for others. Jesus' call toward "Love of neighbour" is essentially political because love is also an act of resistance. It pushes back against people, laws, and leaders that oppress neighbours. And Jesus' call to love is a way of being in the world. Despite the fact we want to know when Jesus will return, that is less important than to keep loving, than keeping the faith. And not because we are better or stronger than others. Grace is God's gift that we are enough even though we are the ones who make mistakes. Even though we are the ones who aren't prepared. So the the warning from Thessalonians is not Paul's call to perfection, but to wake up and remember our calling. This is the coach's pep talk at half time even though the team is losing. It's a call to faith even when we are the ones who are ones with little faith.

This past Thursday over 20 people throughout the BC Synod and beyond wrapped up the Liberating Lutherans reading group that met over Zoom with eight sessions. We had special guests with Lutheran missionary Brian Rude serving in El Salvador, Pr. Seth Perry, who serves in Minnesota and studied at Simon Fraser and lived on the island, and a community organizer within the Uniting Church in Australia. Pr. Aneeta Saroop and Audrey Guay from Spirit of Life Lutheran in Vancouver joined me as co-hosts for these sessions. In our wrap up session there was a strong desire to continue the conversation. While we don't all have time for a weekly reading group, there is a sense of having a monthly incubator conversation to keep up momentum especially for people in the North and Interior where people live far from one another.

And people in other synods, Anglican friends, El Salvador friends. We will share with others when the incubator sessions are happening. The reality is that everyone is a bit lonely and isolated. In Victoria and Vancouver we have an easier time meeting up with other people with similar interests, but it doesn't happen unless we organize together. These kinds of conversations include keeping the faith in the midst of tough times for the wider church and congregations. Some colleagues talk about this being their last year serving their current congregation, unable to afford a full-time pastor, and the pastor unable to support a family with less than full-time work. We all need support these days. As Paul ends the reading, "Therefore encourage one another and build up each other, as indeed you are doing."

Eventually I made it to the BC Transit lost and found. While it seemed hopeful that they had a black backpack we had lost. It turned out not be our backpack. But they assured us they would contact us if they find it. A sense of waiting and being supported by our neighbours. And then it dawned on me, that before the bus we drove briefly in a different Evo car share. Could the backpack be in that car. But how would I find it again, since there are hundreds that all look the same, parked in random parking spaces across Victoria. I contacted Evo which pinpointed the exact car I had rented for the trip. It was now located in James Bay, so I ran to James Bay, called Evo to unlock the car remotely, and there was the missing bag! Sometimes the lost really are found, when you keep faith.

What is your story of keeping faith of being supported by neighbours? And what are ways we need to be supporting one another? I know we have people in the congregation at both ends of the spectrum of life. Babies who were just born, elders who are dying, and everyone in-between. We celebrate joys and mourn losses. Accompanying one another along the way as the body of Christ.