

June 21, 2020  
Jeremiah 20:7-13, Romans 6:12-23, Matthew 10:5a, 21-33  
**"No Need to Fear"**  
(Matt. 10:24-33)

I was shocked to hear that Pickle Lake had four inches of snow last week but I was in awe of the apocalyptic storm that hit Calgary a few days ago. Tornadoes and up to a foot of hail that tore siding off of houses and put holes in cars.

I heard reports that all people could hear during the short but intense period of the storm was a sound like a locomotive and how terrifying that must have been. They simply stayed inside the house not knowing what would happen and how much damage the storm might cause.

Fear is a powerful motivating factor. It can render people unmovable. It can lead them to do irrational things. Do you remember when people wondered why Elizabeth Smart's sister didn't alert her parents when her sister was abducted; but then we learned some years later that she did.

She got up to tell her parents, but saw the kidnapper still in the house and ran back to her bed. She was undoubtedly frozen in terror, frightened into inaction. Fear can control our every thought, our every action.

This morning, we get to listen in on the marching orders that Jesus spoke to his twelve disciples. He sent the 12 disciples out on a missionary training tour throughout the cities and villages of Galilee. Some would love what the disciples had to say. Others would yawn. Still others would sharpen up their pitchforks and run the disciples out of town.

In the face of mistreatment, Jesus gave his disciples some words of encouragement to take with them on their tour of duty. In a word: **DON'T BE AFRAID.** Jesus sent his disciples out into Israel with the Gospel.

Today, Jesus sends us, His family into the community with the Gospel. We seek to listen to Christ. We want to live for Christ. We hope to share Christ with others. Good, good, good.

But if you follow Christ and share the Gospel, you can expect that some will reject it – and resent you! You can be as spiritual as the Dhali Lama and people will be fine with it. But the minute you proclaim Jesus alone as the way, the truth, and the life, people begin to get a bit animated.

I like the reminder that Martin Luther once gave his congregation: “If they crowned Christ with thorns, don’t expect the world to crown you with roses.” I like what Jesus says even better:

"A student is not above his teacher, nor a servant above his master. It is enough for the student to be like his teacher, and the servant like his master. If the head of the house has been called Beelzebub, how much more the members of his household!"

Make no mistake about it, the Lord’s prophets have always been hated by some – just like Jesus. You heard Jeremiah’s lament in our Old Testament Lesson: 7 .... "I am ridiculed all day long; everyone mocks me.... the word of the Lord has brought me insult and reproach all day long."

John the Baptist spoke the truth against king Herod – and it cost him his head. Paul preached the truth – and it cost him his head too! Martin Luther preached the truth – and poked the church in the pocketbook – and lived under the sentence of death for almost 25 years.

The persecution and hatred of God’s Word and those who speak God’s Word still continues today. A few years ago, I was privileged to hear about the mission work that is being done by a medical doctor in Pakistan and of the first men and women being confirmed as Lutherans there.

You won't hear much about it in our synod news, however. Why? Because the pastors and doctor in Pakistan have been marked for death by the Taliban. Having your church bombed and your pastor beheaded is a daily risk to the Christian faith in Pakistan.

If we fear the anti-Christian trash talk in the break room, how would we do if we were in Pakistan? But even though we don't face that kind of persecution in Canada yet, we do have our fears, even now.

We fear the crowds, what others may think of us if we voice our opinions verbally. We fear the crowds, what others might think of us, if we voice our opinions. We remain silent, because we figure what good will it do if I say anything.

And we fear for our relationships with our children as well. Our children and grandchildren are growing up with these same pressures, and we're afraid to talk religion or about God's Word with them.

We fear that we'll lose their love if we do this, if we tell them firmly what God's Word has to say, so in fear we say nothing. Jesus tells us, what we have learned privately in His Word, we need to broadcast openly and boldly to the world.

Listen to our text: "What I tell you in the dark, speak in the daylight; what is whispered in your ear, proclaim from the roofs. Do not be afraid of those who kill the body but cannot kill the soul. Rather, be afraid of the one who can destroy both soul and body in hell."

Jesus says, "If you are put to death for my name, the persecutor may destroy your body, but not your soul. You will live on with me forever in heaven." Remember, the enemies of Christ can only persecute you within the limits that I establish. I am watching over your life."

Rather be more concerned about the final Judgment, where if a person denies Christ as Savior, they will face not just the destruction of their body, but will face eternal torture in hell.

Jesus wants us today to admit our fears, to acknowledge how they've controlled our actions at times for the worse and how they've eroded our trust in Him. He would bid us today to confess our failures BUT to stand up for His Word and His name.

We have been apathetic to sin. We haven't spoken up to our children or grandchildren when God's Word is being compromised. We have sinned BUT does Jesus cast us aside? He could have but He doesn't.

In spite of our chicken little tendencies, Jesus still cares for us. Look at how sufficiently, how meticulously, how lovingly the Lord cares for the sparrows who, by earthly standards, are a rather insignificant part of His creation.

See how He provides for those creatures who don't save for retirement... See how He protects those whose lives could be ended so easily and so quickly by so many other creatures on this planet...

See how life for just one of those seemingly insignificant birds begins and ends only with His permission and knowledge... And then be reminded of the fact that "you are worth more than many sparrows" put together. That's incredible news!!

How much are you worth? You are worth God giving you the roof over your head and the shoes under your feet. You are worth the mom and dad that brought you into the world and the children you brought into the world. You are worth the food that goes in your mouth and the drink that cools your thirst, BUT you are worth even more than that to the Father.

You are worth so much, that the Father wrapped up his Son into human flesh to dwell among us. You are worth so much, that Jesus in love gave up every divine perk and prerogative as He lived a perfect life in your place.

You are worth so much, that Jesus allowed himself to be betrayed for the bargain basement price of 30 pieces of silver. You are worth so much, that Jesus stretched out his arms upon the wood of the cross – to shed holy, precious blood for your forgiveness.

You are worth so much, that Jesus wouldn't let death keep him down – so that, one day, death will not be able to keep you down. A sparrow could rightly fear where its next seed supper is coming from, but there is nothing in life – and death – that the sons and daughters of Christ need fear!

Again Jesus tells us how much he is concerned for our well-being. Every day we lose hairs in a comb or brush. Some of us lose them a bit more easily than others. No one stops to count them; most of the time we don't even notice them until we clean out our brush or wipe out the shower or tub. Yet every one of them has a number in the mind of God.

And the point is obvious. If God takes notice of all these little things, how much more does He take notice of all that is happening with you? The fact that God knows such insignificant information about you demonstrates just how much He loves you...how fiercely He protects you...how closely He holds on to you...how generously He provides for you...and how anxious He is to present to you your crown of eternal life!

Life as a follower of Christ in this world is not an easy one. It wasn't easy for Jesus. We can expect the same as one of His disciples, BUT therein we're also reminded of the very important and comforting truth that we're not going anywhere that the master hasn't gone before, where He hasn't already cleared the way.

He's faced the challenges to His reputation. He knows the struggles that come from family members and loved one questioning His teaching and direction in life. He knows the kinds of pressures that people and authorities can exercise to try to sway your positions and to turn public opinion against you.

He knows what it's like to be in want, to lose everything you own, your family, your friends, your livelihood and even your very life in this world. He's been there, BUT unlike us, He didn't fail. He didn't cave in.

He didn't fail that He might bear away the times we did on the cross. He rose in victory over our sin's death and believing in Him we are filled with hope. He strengthens us with new resolve to live for Him again.

So don't be afraid. We know who will rule in the end, the victory already is secured on the cross and guaranteed with an empty grave. We know that the word that is whispered out of fear in many places today will triumph and be proclaimed in confidence from the rooftops. One day soon, Jesus will acknowledge us before His Father in Heaven, since we acknowledged Him on this earth.

Life in this world will be lost, one way or another; but nothing can take the life that is already ours through faith in Christ Jesus in the world to come. So do not fear little flock, the kingdom of ours remaineth. Amen!