



St John Lutheran Church

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Text: Matt. 10: 24-33

Theme: The more you fear God, the less you fear!

"What does this mean?" This is a good Lutheran question as Luther poses it in the Small Catechism. Following that question, we always see "we should, fear love and trust in God above all things." In our culture and in these times we hear a lot about fear. Fear is thrown around a lot on the news and we hear about daily in our lives. Fear is almost always set in a negative connotation... fear is not something that we relish or look for usually in our lives as most folks see it as something to avoid.

As the Catechism tells us "we are to fear and love God.." Fear is not always bad. For the Christian, there is not an unholy and dreaded fear of death and punishment...but we are still to fear God. Most of us have been taught in Catechism classes and Bible classes that fear of God for the Christian is "respect and awe." Certainly this is true. We are to hold our God in respect and awe...but why? We fear our God... we show our God respect and hold Him in awe, because of who He is. We must always remember who we are talking about here and bear this in mind at all times. The tendency in Christianity today is to think of God, especially our Lord Jesus, in terms of Him being our "Buddy" our best friend. There is this "feel good" notion that the God of the universe is this "Big teddy bear in the sky" and that has nothing better to do than to dote on us and give all we want when we want it. The idea is promoted that Jesus is this "really nice guy, oh yeah, He's the Son of God, but He's my friend." This sadly, completely under estimates completely... and also shows a lack of understanding in who we are talking about and who did come to save us.

Jesus is our Friend ... yes... God is our Father and the Holy Spirit is our Comforter...yes! But our God is much, much more than that! Our God is all of these things for us... and to us... because of the faith He gives us in Baptism in the Person and work of Jesus Christ. But our God is also El Shaddai. The Most High God of the Mountain. The most awesome and powerful being that can be imagined. Our God is the One who simply speaks and Miracles happen. He speaks and things are created out of nothing. He speaks and the dead are raised to life. He speaks and those who were dead and in darkness are brought to light and Life in Christ. It is absolutely vital that we understand this...that we know in our minds what our hearts of faith tell us. Because knowing and remembering who our God is, is also to understand that our God, El Shaddai, the Very Almighty God we fear, love and trust, is the God who is able and willing to keep the Promises He makes to us in Christ!!

We now live in a time a Grace... under the Kingdom of Grace. But we are in the Last Days...and very soon the time of Grace will end. The Jesus we know in the Bible... that Son of God who

came meek and mild, born in a stable...**the** homeless Jesus who wandered about Judea preaching and teaching and healing...**the** Jesus who was mercilessly crucified and died...**the** Jesus who rose from the grave to prove who He is and what He has done...**the** Jesus who came quietly to His disciples to give them His Peace and Commands before His ascension to His Father...**this** Jesus, who now humbly comes to us in and through His Word and His Sacraments... **this** Jesus is coming again... **and soon!**

And when this Jesus returns, *you will not see* "**your Buddy**" coming in the clouds. **The time of** Grace will have ended and the time of Judgment and the Kingdom Glory will have come. **Jesus will come** as the Almighty Son of God. **The Most Glorious** King of all that is or has ever been. **Awesome... awesome will** not begin to describe His return. **Then, we will** see Him as He is meant to be seen. **Then... we will** see and understand the totality of what He has done for us... **and really** understand for the first time what we mean to Him. **All will see** this Jesus and all will fear this Jesus because the God of Glory will present Himself in such a way that no one will doubt who **He IS** and why He has come. **Every knee will** bend and every head will bow...**every** tongue will confess what we as the Church have been confessing for 2000 years. **Jesus is our** God and our Lord.

Sadly, only the Church of our Lord...**only His Bride**, His Communion of Saints...**only these** can understand this "fear." **And understanding who** our Lord is and what He has done...**only we can** understand what He means when He says "**And do not fear those who kill the body and cannot kill the soul; rather fear Him who can destroy both body and soul in hell.**" **The world can** indeed come after us and it will because it came after our Lord. **We are not** above our Master and because the world killed our Lord, it will try and do the same to us, His Church.

We are to fear our God...**but** we are also to understand that He is indeed merciful... **we are to understand that** He gave us His best... **He did** send His Son to save us and bring us back into His Kingdom. **The Truth is** that the more we fear our Father in Heaven...**the** more we understand who and what He is...**as well** as what He has done...**then we** understand that there is less we have to fear what happens to us here on earth. **But how can** we be sure of this? **How can our** simple God given trust in Christ, cause Him to strike fear from our hearts?

We fear less...we fear the world and what the world will do to us... **less... we fear** less because Christ, the Almighty Son of God, gives us His Word and Promise. **As Jesus sent** the Twelve into the world, He told them that they would have trouble...**In fact** He guaranteed it! **In John 16:33** our Lord says: "**In this world you will have trouble. But take heart! I have overcome the world!**"

Christ has overcome the world and the devil... **the war** is over and won... **and yet** we are still to be about the battle our Lord gives us to fight. **As Christians** we are to live out our lives serving our Lord and that means sharing His Gospel wherever and whenever possible. **We are to** be our Lord's means to spread His Word and grow His Kingdom as the Holy Spirit wills. **As we do** this and as we seek our Lord's Will... **we might** be tempted to think that all will always go well...**that** because we are Believing Christians who work hard for the Church and our Lord, our lives would or should go smoothly. **This is simply** not the way it works. **Jesus Himself** says in our text: "**The disciple is not above his master, nor the servant his Lord.**" **And "if they call the Master of the house**

Beelzebub, how much more shall they call them of His household?" Like I told you last week... we belong to the Lord and because we do and because the world hates our Lord, it will hate us.

But we are not to fear the world. We are not to fear what happens to us here on this ball of dust. Our Lord assures us that nothing will or can happen to us without our Heavenly Father's knowledge. Bad things can happen to us and most probably bad things will happen to us at one time or another. This sinful world is a hard place. But Jesus says "Are not two sparrows sold for a farthing? And one of them shall not fall to the ground without your Father. But the very hairs of your head are all numbered. Fear ye not therefore ye are more valuable than many sparrows." You are more valuable than anything to our Lord. You are His Church, His Bride... His Holy people...the very ones who are valuable enough to Him...the ones who mean enough to Him that He should die on a cross...for you... all for you.

So take heart and do not be afraid...this same Jesus who is the Lord of Life and God's own Son is with you and will remain with you as you go about His work. You are His Holy people...yet there are many more who are to become His people. People who will come to faith by the work of the Holy Spirit through Word and Sacrament...people who will become our Lord's beloved and Holy Nation. This is why the Gospel must be proclaimed at all costs...nothing is more important. St. Paul wrote "For I am not ashamed of the Gospel because it is the Power of God for the salvation of everyone who believes." Romans 1: 16.

It is this same Gospel which is the very means our Lord gives... not only to come to faith... but also to cast out fear. The Gospel as it comes to us in God's Word...as it is manifested to us in His Sacraments. The Gospel works faith and builds faith and it casts out fear. It is absolutely amazing...it is indeed the very Power of God. The Power by which we are sustained. Why are we commanded to come to church? Why are we commanded hear God's Word and take part in His Sacraments? Because our Lord knows that without Him we would soon give way to fear and uncertainty and doubt. Without this Power of God in the Gospel, we would soon fall away from faith and be lost! To forsake the Gospel in whatever form it comes, Word or Sacrament...is to forsake life itself.

God has every detail of our lives under His loving and watchful eye. Our comfort is in knowing that we are indeed more valuable than a couple of sparrows...we are His children and He knows what we suffer and how we suffer in this world. He is with us and no matter what comes... and He will remain with us. He is faithful and by His Power we are to remain faithful. Faithful to all He has given us in His Teaching...faithful to His Church and His work...faithful to each other as His people.

That faithfulness can be shown by being actively involved here in the running of this congregation. It can be shown in helping us to plan a Mission for our community and beyond. But it can also be shown in daily works of love, like helping at the Care Center as we minister to those folks who live there. Like helping to make punch or cookies for VBS, or teaching at VBS or Sunday School. Like helping one of our elderly by mowing a lawn or pulling some weeds...or simply by stopping by and telling them that you've been thinking about them. Or as simple as showing kindness to a stranger. In doing such things, in remaining faithful, we show our Lord's

Love to all we meet. **There is no** act of faithfulness and Christian love that goes un-noticed by our God.

This world is not an easy place to be... **especially if** you are a Christian. **But remain we** must in this desert until our Lord comes or until we leave this veil of tears by the portal of death. **Through it all**, our Lord is with us as He has always been. **We may** not see the pillar of cloud by day or the pillar of fire by night as did the ancient Hebrews...**but** our Lord is with us. **His Word lights** our way and strengthens us for the journey...**His** constant presence in our lives continues to give us His Peace...**so** that we continue "**to fear, love and trust our God above all things.**" **In the Name of the Father and of the Son + and of the Holy Spirit...amen**

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