



Grace to you and peace from God our Father and our Lord and Savior Jesus Christ. **AMEN**

In our lesson from Matthew today there is one phrase that really stood out to me this week. It is verse 31. "So do not be afraid, you are of more value than many sparrows." Do not be afraid. We are valuable in God's eyes. God counts even the hairs on our heads. That is just how much God cares for you and for me. So do not be afraid.

But fear is a very paralyzing emotion. Fear can make people not act or it can make people act and do foolish things. The dictionary says that fear is an unpleasant emotion caused by the belief that someone or something is dangerous and likely to cause pain or a threat. Fear is triggered by a threat or harm that is real or imagined. As I was studying for this message, I found a list of the most common fears in 2015. Here are some of the top ten fears: fear of flying, fear of enclosed spaces, fear of insects, fear of snakes, fear of dogs, fear of storms, fear of needles. Can you relate to any of those? There is at least one on that list that can make me feel frightened.

I wonder what will 2020's biggest fears list look like: fear of a pandemic, COVID 19, fear of crime, fear of white supremacists, fear of government restrictions on fire arms, fear of economic failure, fear of illegal immigration, fear of protestors, fear of looters. What things our society has to deal with today. Many of them are quite enough to make any one fearful.

Thomas Merton, a Trappist monk, who frequently wrote in the first half of the 20th century said about social justice, "The root of all war is fear, not so much the fear we have of one another but the fear we have of everything." Fear can paralyze us or put us on the defensive. Remember 9/11. We as Americans, we were so confused that we did not even know what to fear on that day. Irrationally we could get rid of our fears if we just avoid tall buildings and air travel.

More on a personal level fear can grip us: fear of loosing our jobs, fear of our physical safety, fear of harassment or bullying, fear of being in relationships or fear of being unprepared for what is next. It is easy to see that fear can come to us on many different levels; emotional, physical, personal, communal, rational or irrational.

Well, our Gospel lesson today tells us to not be afraid. Jesus makes a simple point to the disciples. No matter what happens, do not be afraid. Jesus faced confrontations and so will

the disciples, but Jesus reassures them that no matter what might come their way, they should not fear for God will have the last word.

God loves us enough to count the hairs on our heads. For me that number is getting lesser each day, but God knows that. Even so, God will continue to love us and me even if all our hairs fall out. Nothing we can do, even having a bald head, will stop God from loving us. So what is there to fear?

I would like to share with you 5 of what I think are the best scriptures that can help us overcome fear. I hope that this will be helpful to you.

#1. Deuteronomy 31:8 “It is the Lord who goes before you. He will be with you; he will not fail you or forsake you. Do not fear or be dismayed.” This is God’s promise to us, that we will never have to go it alone. He is all we need and He will never let us down.

#2 Romans 8:28 “We know that all things work together for good, for those who love God, who are called according to his purpose.” No matter how much of a mess we make, it is never too late for God’s help. God not only forgives us, but he opens doors, answers prayers and showers us with blessings that we do not deserve. God is good all the time. And He will show you the purpose for your life.

#3 Isaiah 43:1 “Do not fear, for I have redeemed you. I have called you by name, you are mine.” Awesome declaration! God, the creator of everything that is, is so limitless that He can care about each day of my life, all the details. Yes, Bruce and Stan, God is in the details and they all matter, they all matter to Him. We are God’s prized people, His redeemed people, who need not fear.

#4 1 John 4:18 “Perfect love casts out fear.” I can still hear Grandma Brown saying this verse to me, even though I was too young to understand what it meant. God is love, perfect love. And the more we come to know that love, the less there is to fear. Trusting God or abiding in His love is what we come to realize when we have faith in Him.

#5 Psalm 18:2 “The Lord is my rock, my fortress, and my deliverer.” This saying by King David came as he gave thanks to God for saving him from his enemies. And what a verse to hang on to as we face challenges of our day. God is our rock too, if we only let Him be.

Fear has no place in our hearts or minds because we are believers. The Holy Spirit will guide us to trust and have faith that God will deliver us completely from all fear.

So even if tomorrow a tornado levels Park Falls, or a terrorist attack happens here, or if this church building were to burn to the ground, or COVID 19 were to ravage our community, we can be assured that God would still love us and be with us in those tragedies. Sorrow, pain, loneliness, sickness, and devastation will still exist but they do not have to have

control over us. Only God has ultimate control. And He will love and support us through any such ordeals.

Jesus said, "DO not be afraid". "Fear not". Jesus repeats this in the dark time and in the times of light. So go out and proclaim this to all unbelievers. Do not be afraid! I challenge you to share that good news with all who are stuck in fear.

You know, today we are not yet able to be together here in the sanctuary at Christ the Servant, but as a body of Christ we still praise the Lord. We are grateful for God's free gift of His love and His grace. It is a grace that comes to each and everyone of us through his Son, Jesus Christ. Our eternal destination is very important, so important that God entrusted our eternity to only His Son. For we cannot save ourselves. We cannot pay the price for our own salvation. We cannot even through our good works earn heaven and we surely cannot be fearless with God's grace. We are saved by grace, God's grace and His undeserved love for us.

So what is there to fear? We have a God who loves us so much that not only does He count the hairs on our heads, but also He sent his only Son to die for us, so that we can have life abundant, forgiveness of all our sins and eternal life. The true victory folks, already has been secured on the cross and guaranteed with an empty grave. Nothing, not even fear, can separate us from the love of God in Christ Jesus. **AMEN**