

Ever feel like just throwing up your hands and screaming! Giving up when things don't change or seem to matter or make a difference? Ever felt like God is doing little, if anything in your situation, at least not helping out as He should? And which of you don't have a hostile culture working against God's desire for our lives? Where you see God's truth, God's value of all life, mocked. God's call to repent, falls on deaf ears?

That's the lament, despair we heard from Jeremiah. They aren't listening. He warns them of God's coming judgment, repent before it's too late, but they mock him. Plot against him. 'How dare he call *us* to repentance! How dare he call *us* wrong!' I wonder how many people were waiting for us to fall, wanting us to come down with the virus because we stayed open.

Like Jeremiah, Jesus speaks to His disciples of the rejection, intimidation, hatred, persecution because they're speaking, doing God's Word. For sin doesn't like to be uncovered or corrected. Sinfulness wants to be excused or accepted as good, even celebrated. Speak against it, a culture that holds to sin, you will feel its wrath and be labeled for hate; suspended from social media; may lose your job. This happens in our day, as it did for Jeremiah and the disciples, you'll lose opportunities, be hated, may lose family, friends because of God's truth.

Yet! your Lord tells you **fear not**, child of God. **What can man do to you? Are not two sparrows sold for a penny, yet not one of them falls to the ground apart from your Father's will.** God deems you to be worth more than everything else in all creation.

As comforting as this is, our anxiety is because of sin. Self-esteem can be a terrible lie. I warn you -even as I warn myself- against judging your worth on the basis of how much you've been able to accomplish, what you have, what you do, how many people honor. respect you. Your worth is not in you. It's in the value God has placed on you.

Your worth to Him -nothing less than His precious blood, your worth -the price of Christ's life, given in your place in death at the cross.

He paid for you with His very life. That defines how much you are

worth. Your worth as a baptized child into His death, resurrection, immeasurable.

God counts every hair on your head. Even though for some His work is getting easier, even your hairs mattered. Nothing in your life is outside of His concern, nothing is outside of His active works for you.

Like Jeremiah we may all feel at times like Lord, you have deceived me, look at this mess, look at what's happened, what's happened to a loved one. Then like Jeremiah in repentance, reflect upon His promises –His daily works for you; starting in despair -ends in joy, saying: ***Sing to the Lord; praise the Lord! He has delivered my life!*** even in the midst of it all. So true for you.

How do you confront fears in our lives? Especially things you can't control. There is much to fear. The trouble children can get into. A call from the doctor. Maybe that soreness is something serious. You all have stories, one week someone is fine, the next, just days to live. Who hasn't had family die of cancer and also think "could this be cancer, or what if." And as you age, what will your health, your care be. If you get forgetful, could it be more serious.

And today, how do you react if there's a cough? What does the future hold? Assuming Christ doesn't return soon, what kind of world will this be for our grandchildren. You have a lot to be fearful.

Fear not. Sinfully, we worry, pity ourselves in fear of what will happen. I tell you, **fear not.** Now that's one of my problems with some of you, you won't listen to me.

But when Jesus says to you! **fear not**, He backs it up with His works. He keeps you, as He kept Jeremiah, those disciples, all His own. What can man do to me? What can truly harm you? Nothing.

How can you fear a virus or any illness as God's own. Even Death does not terrify you for you know you will never die. Hell is an empty threat. Your entrance into heaven has already been paid. No evil or plague shall truly befall you. The one who holds you each day tells you, **Fear not.** Live your life trusting your baptism. His daily works, promises are still good and always will be.