

Sunday, June 21, 2020 📅 3rd Sunday after Pentecost

Good News for Cowards

Jesus is more straightforward in today's gospel than we might want to hear. He makes it strikingly clear that there is danger in this life, especially in following Jesus in his way of love, mercy, justice, and compassion. There is danger because many forces oppose God's way because of fear, greed, and selfishness.

Just by saying these things, Jesus raises our anxiety and provokes our own worry. But he doesn't leave us there. In fact, he says outright, "Do not fear" (Matt. 10:28). And beyond that, he tells us why we do not need to be afraid: "You are valuable to God."

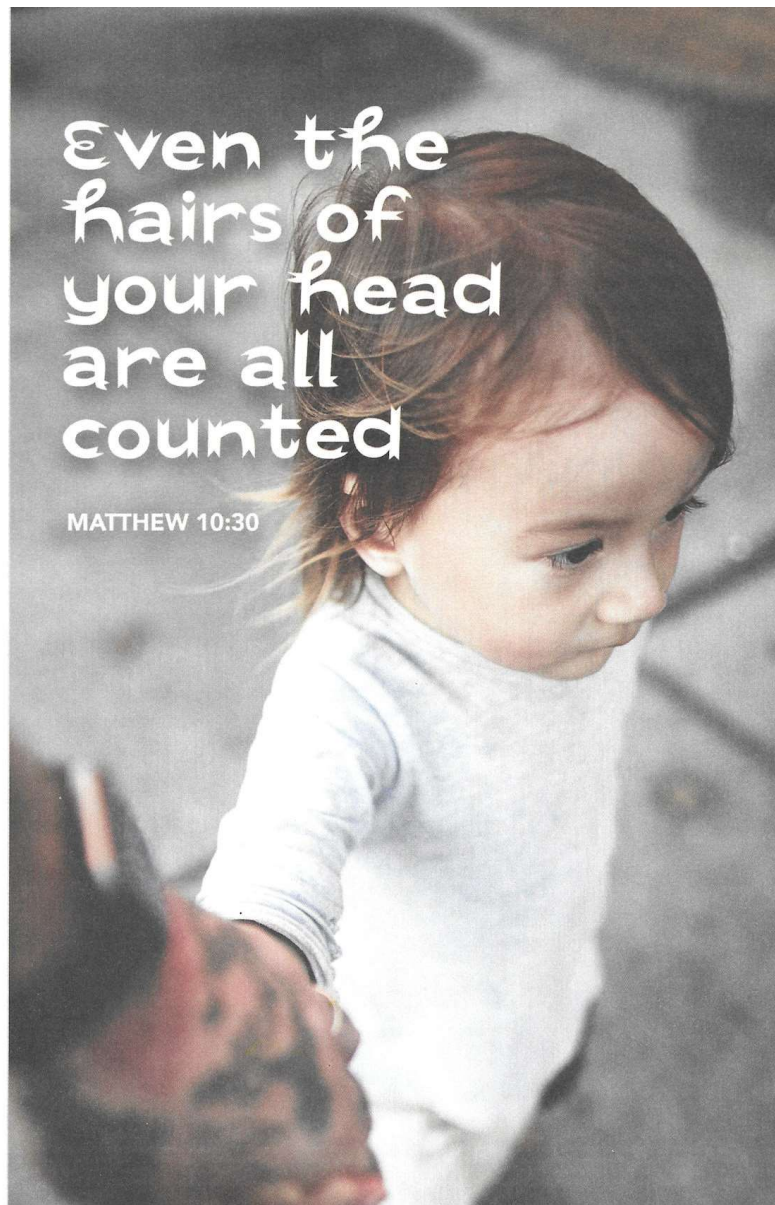
We might feel like cowards at times. Fear grips us. We find it difficult to act for the sake of the gospel when there is risk, be it physical, social, or financial. The word *coward* comes from the word for "tail," like an animal putting its tail between its legs. We want to put our tail between our legs and hide.

Jesus summons us to something else: courage. The word *courage* comes from the word for "heart." Sometimes we say to someone facing a difficult time, "Take heart!" Courage enables a person to act even though they are afraid. They act from their heart, their sense of who they really are. Jesus tells us who we really are: we are valuable to God, so our lives matter. We will not be forgotten or abandoned, especially when we face troubles. This is our heart, our courage.

Jesus also says, "It is enough for the disciple to be like the teacher" (Matt. 10:25). Jesus faced ridicule, rejection, suffering, and death for his commitment to God's kingdom of love. We are not alone in our attempts to walk the way of love, mercy, justice, and compassion. Jesus, our teacher, walks this way with us. Take heart!

Even the
hairs of
your head
are all
counted

MATTHEW 10:30



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Celebrate

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God does not promise that the path of the disciple will be easy. Jeremiah feels the pain of rejection from those who do not want to hear what he has to say. Jesus declares that his words may bring stark division. Even so, we need not be afraid for God accounts for each hair on our heads. Though we may experience rejection, frustration, division, and death, God's grace and love make us a new creation each day. Marked with the cross and filled with holy food, we are sent from worship to witness to Christ in the world.

Prayer of the Day

Teach us, good Lord God, to serve you as you deserve, to give and not to count the cost, to fight and not to heed the wounds, to toil and not to seek for rest, to labor and not to ask for reward, except that of knowing that we do your will, through Jesus Christ, our Savior and Lord. **Amen.**

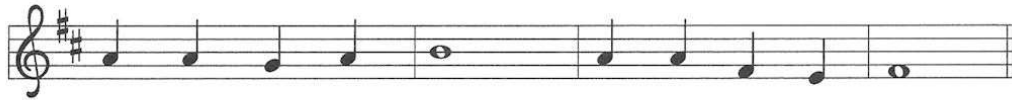
First Reading

Jeremiah 20:7-13

Jeremiah accuses God of forcing him into a ministry that only brings him contempt and persecution. Yet Jeremiah is confident that God will be a strong protector against his enemies and commits his life into God's hands.

O LORD, you have enticed me,
and I was enticed;
you have overpowered me,
and you have prevailed.
I have become a laughingstock all
day long;
everyone mocks me.
⁸For whenever I speak, I must cry out,
I must shout, "Violence and
destruction!"
For the word of the LORD has become
for me
a reproach and derision all day long.
⁹If I say, "I will not mention him,
or speak any more in his name,"
then within me there is something
like a burning fire
shut up in my bones;
I am weary with holding it in,
and I cannot.
¹⁰For I hear many whispering:
"Terror is all around!
Denounce him! Let us denounce him!"
All my close friends
are watching for me to stumble.

"Perhaps he can be enticed,
and we can prevail against him,
and take our revenge on him."
¹¹But the LORD is with me like a
dread warrior;
therefore my persecutors will
stumble,
and they will not prevail.
They will be greatly shamed,
for they will not succeed.
Their eternal dishonor
will never be forgotten.
¹²O LORD of hosts, you test the
righteous,
you see the heart and the mind;
let me see your retribution upon them,
for to you I have committed
my cause.
¹³Sing to the LORD;
praise the LORD!
For he has delivered the life of
the needy
from the hands of evildoers.



An - swer me, O LORD, for your love is kind.

Surely, for your sake I have suf-¹fered reproach,
and shame has cov-¹ered my face.

⁸**I have become a stranger to ¹my own kindred,
an alien to my ¹mother's children.**

⁹Zeal for your house has eat-¹en me up;
the scorn of those who scorn you has fall-¹en upon me.

¹⁰**I humbled my-¹self with fasting,
but that was turned to ¹my reproach. R**

[¹¹I put on ¹sackcloth also,
and became a by-¹word among them.

¹²**Those who sit at the gate mur-¹mur against me,
and the drunkards make ¹songs about me.**

¹³But as for me, this is my prayer to you, at the time you have ¹set, O LORD:
"In your great mercy, O God, answer me with your un-¹failing help.

¹⁴**Save me from the mire; do not ¹let me sink;
let me be rescued from those who hate me
and out of ¹the deep waters. R**

¹⁵Let not the torrent of waters wash over me,
neither let the deep swal-¹low me up;
do not let the pit shut its ¹mouth upon me.]

¹⁶**Answer me, O LORD, for your ¹love is kind;
in your great compassion, ¹turn to me.**

¹⁷Hide not your face ¹from your servant;
be swift and answer me, for I am ¹in distress.

¹⁸**Draw near to me ¹and redeem me;
because of my enemies de-¹liver me. R**

In baptism we were incorporated into the reality of Christ's death and resurrection. We have been made new in Christ through his death and resurrection to live freed from sin.

Should we continue in sin in order that grace may abound? ²By no means! How can we who died to sin go on living in it? ³Do you not know that all of us who have been baptized into Christ Jesus were baptized into his death? ⁴Therefore we have been buried with him by baptism into death, so that, just as Christ was raised from the dead by the glory of the Father, so we too might walk in newness of life.

⁵For if we have been united with him in a death like his, we will certainly be united with him in a resurrection like

his. ⁶We know that our old self was crucified with him so that the body of sin might be destroyed, and we might no longer be enslaved to sin. ⁷For whoever has died is freed from sin. ⁸But if we have died with Christ, we believe that we will also live with him. ⁹We know that Christ, being raised from the dead, will never die again; death no longer has dominion over him. ¹⁰The death he died, he died to sin, once for all; but the life he lives, he lives to God. ¹¹So you also must consider yourselves dead to sin and alive to God in Christ Jesus.

Gospel

Matthew 10:24-39

Jesus warns his disciples that their ministry in his name will meet with opposition. However, he assures them that they need not fear for the truth will come to light. Life is found in Christ.

[Jesus said to the twelve:] "A disciple is not above the teacher, nor a slave above the master; ²⁵it is enough for the disciple to be like the teacher, and the slave like the master. If they have called the master of the house Beelzebul, how much more will they malign those of his household!

²⁶"So have no fear of them; for nothing is covered up that will not be uncovered, and nothing secret that will not become known. ²⁷What I say to you in the dark, tell in the light; and what you hear whispered, proclaim from the housetops. ²⁸Do not fear those who kill the body but cannot kill the soul; rather fear him who can destroy both soul and body in hell. ²⁹Are not two sparrows sold for a penny? Yet not one of them will fall to the ground apart from your Father. ³⁰And even the hairs of your head are all counted. ³¹So do not be afraid; you are of more value than many sparrows.

³²"Everyone therefore who acknowledges me before others, I also will acknowledge before my Father in heaven; ³³but whoever denies me before others, I also will deny before my Father in heaven.

³⁴"Do not think that I have come to bring peace to the earth; I have not come to bring peace, but a sword.

³⁵For I have come to set a man against his father,
and a daughter against her mother,
and a daughter-in-law against her mother-in-law;

³⁶and one's foes will be members of one's own household.

³⁷Whoever loves father or mother more than me is not worthy of me; and whoever loves son or daughter more than me is not worthy of me; ³⁸and whoever does not take up the cross and follow me is not worthy of me. ³⁹Those who find their life will lose it, and those who lose their life for my sake will find it."

Prayers of Intercession

The prayers are prepared locally for each occasion. The following examples may be adapted or used as appropriate.

Called into unity with one another and the whole creation, let us pray for our shared world.

A brief silence.

Expansive God, you bring diverse voices together to form your church. Open our hearts and unstop our ears to learn from one another, that differences might not overshadow our baptismal unity. Hear us, O God.

Your mercy is great.

Providing God, your creation shows us that life comes from death. Renew the places where our land, air, and waterways have been ill for too long (*local environmental concerns may be prayed for*). Direct the work of all who care for birds and their habitats. Hear us, O God.

Your mercy is great.

Protecting God, sustain and keep safe all who work to defend others across the world (*especially*). Revive and strengthen organizations dedicated to caring for refugees and migrants while their homelands struggle for peace. Hear us, O God.

Your mercy is great.

Loving God, you promise to be with all who are persecuted for your sake. Guide all who speak your word of justice and console any who are tormented or targeted for being who they are. Hear us, O God.

Your mercy is great.

Compassionate God, you are with us and we are never alone. Bless all fathers and father figures who strive to love and nurture as you do. Comfort all who long to be fathers and all for whom this day is difficult. Hear us, O God.

Your mercy is great.

Here other intercessions may be offered.

Reigning God, you bless us with guides and caretakers in the faith. As we give thanks for those who have died (*especially Onesimos Nesib, translator and evangelist*), increase our care for one another until we walk with them in newness of life. Hear us, O God.

Your mercy is great.

Receive these prayers, O God, and those too deep for words; through Jesus Christ our Lord.

Amen.

Preparing for Next Week

Monday Psalm 6. **Tuesday** Revelation 2:8-11. **Wednesday** (John the Baptist) Luke 1:57-67 [68-80]. **Thursday** (commemoration of the Presentation of the Augsburg Confession, 1530; Philipp Melancthon, renewer of the church, died 1560) Psalm 89:1-4, 15-18. **Friday** Galatians 5:7-12. **Saturday** (commemoration of Cyril, Bishop of Alexandria, died 444) Jeremiah 28:1-4. **Fourth Sunday after Pentecost** (commemoration of Irenaeus, Bishop of Lyons, died around 202) Jeremiah 28:5-9; Psalm 89:1-4, 15-18; Romans 6:12-23; Matthew 10:40-42.

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