

In the Name of the Father and of the ☩ Son and of the Holy Spirit. Amen.

Grace and Peace to you from God our Father and the Lord Jesus Christ and may our Lord and Savior sanctify you in the truth, for His word is truth. Amen

Twenty-Fourth Sunday after Trinity (2021)

Take Heart, You Have Been Given the Gift of Faith

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“Jesus turned, and seeing her he said, “Take heart, daughter; your faith has made you well.” And instantly the woman was made well.” (Matthew 9:22, ESV)

The world is full of fear and the writer to the Hebrews reminds us that all those who fear death are subject to lifelong slavery (Hebrews 2:15). However, when we investigate the world of men, we cannot help but see that fear abounds. Despite affluent societies, laughter, and bravado, fear abounds in every nook and cranny of the world. The poor are afraid of social insecurity, the rich fear poverty, the sick fear the outcome of their sickness, and the healthy fear becoming sick. There is fear of war and famine, earthquake and tornado, drought and flood, fire and freeze and the list goes on and on and on.

Given that natural man is a man of fear we would do well to ask the question, “How can man overcome his fear?” By himself, natural man is defenseless against the fear which haunts him. But a portal has been opened to natural man to lead him out of the pit of fear into the valley of peace. The prophet Isaiah shows how that portal opens, saying: ***“Say to those who have an anxious heart, ‘Be strong; fear not! Behold, your God will come with vengeance, with the recompense of God. He will come and save you’” (Isaiah 35:4 ESV)***. Furthermore, God told Abram, and He tells us, ***“Fear not ... I am your shield” (Genesis 15:1 ESV)***.

Every day when I say my morning prayer, I pray for our nation and for men throughout the world that God would rescue them from their fear, that He would rescue them from that which enslaves them, freeing them by His Word, which is the true source of liberty and freedom, the antithesis of fear. In God’s Word we find what a blessing it is to be a follower of Christ. To have been cleansed in the waters of Baptism and made a child of God’s, an inheritor of the heavenly promise of eternal life with His Son, our Lord and Savior, Jesus Christ.

When our Lord Jesus was born, the angels told the shepherds, ***“Fear not!” (Luke 2:10)***. When our Lord Jesus rose from the dead, the angel once again said to the women, ***“Fear not!” (Matthew 28:5 KJV)*** Throughout His ministry our Lord Jesus told His followers, whenever they exhibited fear, to fear not. When they would exhibit fear, He would say to them, ***“Why are you afraid, O you of little faith?” (Matthew 8:26 ESV)*** With these words our Lord shines the light of truth on their fear and their struggling faith. Yet he also encourages them, saying; ***“Fear not, little flock, for it is your Father’s good pleasure to give you the kingdom” (Luke 12:32 ESV)***. And again, He says, ***“Peace I leave with you; my peace I give to you.”*** Therefore, ***“Let not your hearts be troubled, neither let them be afraid” (John 14:27 ESV)***.

Thus, as Christians, we are encouraged to fear not as we travel through this temporal life with the eyes of our faith always on the blessings of God and the eternal life, He promises all who believe. Because we know God and our blessed Savior Jesus Christ, we travel without fear knowing they have our eternal welfare and safety first and foremost in mind. They have prepared us, through faith, to live in peace and tranquility with them for all eternity.

The Gospel Reading this morning shows us a woman who was afflicted with a debilitating illness for twelve years. During that time in addition to her physical suffering she had to endure the inability of doctors to properly diagnose her disease. Moreover, both Mark and Luke tell us she had spent all her money on these physicians who were unable to heal her, and her condition worsened. She is beside herself with fear and pain and hopelessness. But not all is lost; she heard that Jesus, the One about whom everyone was talking, saying He was a miracle worker, was in Capernaum. Thus, she says to herself, ***“If I only touch his garment, I will be made well”*** (v. 21).

As was typical, whenever Jesus moved among the people, He gathered large crowds. It was no different on this day. As He walked the streets of Capernaum, surrounded by a large crowd, the woman, ***“Came up behind him and touched the fringe of his garment, and immediately her discharge of blood ceased”*** (Luke 8:44 ESV). She was healed! Years of pain and suffering were erased in a moment, in a flash; the healing power of our Lord Jesus went out from Him and into her, curing her of her disease. One who was suffering from an overwhelming physically problem, one which made her ritually unclean, was not just healed, but cleansed by Jesus by the mere touching of His garment. How could this happen? How could this be?

Faith: this marvelous gift from God, opened the door for her healing. This woman had heard the reports of Jesus (Mark 5:27). She had heard that He was the Christ, the anointed One of God. She had heard that some had called Him the Son of the Living God and that He was able to perform miracles based on His own power. She had heard. This reminds us that the apostle Paul had said, ***“Faith comes from hearing ... the word of Christ”*** (Romans 10:17 ESV). Thus, what she heard, she believed. She believed He was the Messiah, the promised One from God, divine yet human and able to answer all her needs. When she touched the fringe of His robe in that crowd, she poured out her heart to Him in silent prayer, seeking His divine healing, believing that healing would happen. Her faith was rewarded for as quickly as she touched our Lord’s garment, ***“immediately the flow of blood dried up, and she felt in her body that she was healed of her disease.”*** (Mark 5:29, ESV) Miracle of miracles, her faith had led her to the One who alone was able to heal her infirmity, and the One who knows the hearts of men, turned to her and said, ***“Take heart, daughter; your faith has made you well”*** (v. 22).

The Gospel Reading also shows us the ruler of the synagogue coming to Jesus, pleading for his daughter’s life. Here, a ruling Jew comes to Jesus, this itinerant rabbi, begging for His help. Begging for his daughter’s life. Here again, is a ritually unclean person who needs Jesus’ help. This case is remarkable because the father is a ruler of the synagogue, a Jew, a friend of Pharisees and Sadducees, who were our Lord’s religious opponents. But the father’s pleading is not based on an uncertain hope, but on the blessed assurance that the One to whom he makes his plea, will raise his daughter from the dead. This man, this Jew, had faith in the healing power of Jesus. The Holy Spirit had touched this man heart and gave him the gift of faith to believe in the healing power of Christ. And our Lord does not disappoint.

Complying with the man’s request, Jesus goes to his house where his daughter lays dead on her bed. St. Matthew tells us, ***“When Jesus came to the ruler’s house and saw the flute players and the crowd making a commotion, he said, “Go away, for the girl is not dead but sleeping.” And they laughed at him.”*** The crowd thinks, who is this? We know the girl is dead. What can He do for her? St. Matthew continues, ***“But when the crowd had been put outside, he went in and took her by the hand, and the girl arose.”*** (Matthew 9:23–25, ESV) The girl lives. She who was once dead, now lives!

This is you and I. We were once dead in our trespasses and sins, but Christ came and gave us life. Life through rebirth in the blessed waters of Baptism, life through faith in Christ Jesus, a life which continues after our earthly body dies and gives up its soul. Faith in Christ which leads

from death to life. Like the ruler's daughter, at our death, He will take our hand and raise us to life everlasting with Him.

The woman was healed because she tossed her fear aside and trusted in the gift given her by God, to believe in the healing power of His beloved Son, Jesus Christ. Jesus helped this woman, who was beyond human help, and He is eager and willing to help all who have faith in Him. Not just faith in His ability to heal physical infirmities, but faith that our Lord Jesus heals all infirmities, physical and spiritual. Faith which shouts out, my Lord and Savior Jesus Christ died on the Altar of the Cross for the forgiveness of my sins. Faith that firmly believes that Jesus is the Savior of all mankind from sin, death, and the devil. This is the faith of the woman who was healed, and the same type of faith will heal you of your greatest infirmity, sin.

The girl who was raised from the dead, Christ raised because of the faith of her father. He will likewise raise us from the dead to life everlasting because of faith, faith that overcomes the fear of death.

This comforting and blessed truth of great importance in the midst of a fearful world where sickness and death reign. Turn around, everywhere you look, you see the world as one huge waiting room filled with people crying out for medical attention. Especially in this time of COVID. An although medical science is advancing at a rapid pace with doctors constantly making new breakthroughs in the control and elimination of disease, none of these breakthroughs answer the question of curing the soul of the oldest disease known to man, sin. This sickness is here, and it abounds in every man. Sin compounds our suffering when we're struck with a physical illness. As the disease attacks our body, Satan attacks our conscience and our heart adding to our burden. Overcome by the distress of our illness and the attacks of Satan, we begin to fear; we fear our mortality and our immortality, but Jesus comes and reminds us; *Take Heart, You Have Been Given the Gift of Faith*, therefore, be not afraid, trust in Me.

There is no doubt that when we're sick God wants us to use the human means He has made available to help us, doctors, and medicine. However, as we use food and drink and modern medicine to sustain our bodies, God reminds us, "***man does not live by bread alone, but man lives by every word that comes from the mouth of the Lord***" (*Deut. 8:3 ESV*). Thus while you're sick, using doctors and medicine, Jesus comes to you and gives you His assurance encouraging you to believe the Word that tells you Jesus rules over all creation, heaven and earth. Believe Him when He says He will never forget you, telling you, "***Are not five sparrows sold for two pennies? And not one of them is forgotten before God. Why, even the hairs of your head are all numbered. Fear not; you are of more value than many sparrows***" (*Luke 12:6-7 ESV*). No, the One who gave His life for you upon the Altar of the Cross so you would not have to suffer the spiritual agony of God's wrath is not about to abandon you in the midst of your physical trials. The woman wanted only to touch our Lord's robe and she would be healed. The ruler only wanted our Lord to touch his daughter, and she would be revived. Therefore, you, as a child of God, can reach out and grab our Lord's hand. For He who made you an heir with Him through the waters of Baptism also willingly died for you even when you were His enemy. He loved you before you loved Him. No, He will never abandon you for you are one whom He loves.

Yes, the world is full of fear and all those who fear death are subject to lifelong slavery, but when that hour comes when you must face that great foe, death, Jesus comes and gently whispers into your ears, *Take Heart, You Have Been Given the Gift of Faith*. He says to you, "***I am the resurrection and the life. Whoever believes in me, though he die, yet shall he live, and everyone who lives and believes in me shall never die.***" (*John 11:25-26 ESV*). Therefore, we plead to God, asking, "God, grant us Your Spirit to believe. Help us to look to Jesus, to hold

Jesus, to believe in His Word of promise and peace replacing our fear with a godly courage so that in all things we can confidently sing: ***“O death, where is your victory? O death, where is your sting?” But thanks be to God, who gives us the victory through our Lord Jesus Christ” (1 Cor. 15:55 ESV)***. In the name of Jesus. Amen.

May the peace of God, which passes all understanding, keep your hearts and minds through Christ Jesus. Amen.