

What Should We Fear?

THIRD SUNDAY AFTER PENTECOST, Proper 7[a]

JUNE 25, 2017

MATTHEW 10:5[a], 21-33

⁵ These twelve Jesus sent out, instructing them, ...²¹ “Brother will deliver brother over to death, and the father his child, and children will rise against parents and have them put to death, ²² and you will be hated by all for my name’s sake. But the one who endures to the end will be saved. ²³ When they persecute you in one town, flee to the next, for truly, I say to you, you will not have gone through all the towns of Israel before the Son of Man comes. ²⁴ A disciple is not above his teacher, nor a servant above his master. ²⁵ It is enough for the disciple to be like his teacher, and the servant like his 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 that will not be revealed, or hidden that will not be known.** ²⁷ **What I tell you in the dark, say in the light, and what you hear whispered, proclaim on the housetops.** ²⁸ **And do not fear those who kill the body but cannot kill the soul. Rather fear him who can destroy both soul and body in Hell.** ²⁹ **Are not two sparrows sold for a penny? And not one of them will fall to the ground apart from your Father.** ³⁰ **But even the hairs of your head are all numbered.** ³¹ **Fear not, therefore; you are of more value than many sparrows.** ³² **So everyone who acknowledges me before men, I also will acknowledge before my Father who is in Heaven,** ³³ **but whoever denies me before men, I also will deny before my Father who is in Heaven.”**

IN THE NAME OF JESUS.

Let us learn from our Lord Jesus how to fear—how to fear in joy and hope.

“If they have called the master of the house Beelzebul,”

said Jesus,

“how much more will they malign those of his household. ²⁶ So have no fear of them, for nothing is covered that will not be revealed, or hidden that will not be known.”

[Matthew 10:26]

“Do not fear those who kill the body but cannot kill the soul,”

said Jesus,

“Rather, fear him who can destroy both soul and body in Hell.”

[Matthew 10:28]

Then our Lord Jesus says,

“Even the hairs of your head are all numbered. ³¹ Fear not, therefore; you are of more value than many sparrows.

So from this Lord who knows we have much to fear in our world, but who says to us, ***Fear only him who can cast you into Hell***, we may learn how to fear.

When Jesus tells us to fear not, it's not because he is naïve to what we have to fear in our world, in our lives, in our own families.

He knows we have much to fear.

We will find our fear where we find ourselves in jeopardy of losing something.

We may think of the most foundational things the Lord has instituted for us, and we can see them being torn down around us, and not knowing what to do, not knowing how to fix it, we fear.

What are the most foundational things? Nothing is more foundational in our Lord's creation than the family, than marriage. Our Lord instituted marriage as a first gift for man and woman, saying God created male and female in his own image, and saying the two, the man and the woman, become one-flesh, and that what God has joined together, let no one tear apart. And he establishes this gift of the marriage of man and woman so that the two would be fruitful and multiply.

This is foundational, it is sure and certain, instituted by the Word of God, so that families would be

brought forth and would be built up in the Lord's gifts.

And we see it torn down. We see people teaching a marriage designed by men, redesigned, until it's so misshapen it's barely recognizable.

And we fear. What are we as Christians given to do? We know we live in a sinful world; we know a sinful world will tear at the Lord's gifts and pervert them; we know that we, ourselves, in our own sinful flesh, sin against marriage with our own self-centeredness and meanness, our own lustfulness; we know how marriage will be disparaged and attacked in our own lives and in our sinful world—and seeing marriage torn down, seeing families weakened, we don't know how to fix it; we fear.

And then we remember, we didn't learn about marriage from the justice of the peace, but from our Lord's word which instituted it. We remember, marriage wasn't instituted by the county clerk's office or by whatever language the clerk requires on a piece of paper, but by our Lord's Word. We remember that marriage was around before there was a Supreme Court, and will be around long after the Court has gone the way of all manmade institutions.

Then we consider our Lord's Word instituting marriage—*the man and the woman shall become one-flesh* (Genesis 2), and, *what God has joined together, let no one separate* (Matthew 19:6)—and remembering this, we realize, marriage will remain because it is from our Lord's Word. And nothing of the sinful world will remove the Lord's Word.

It is true, something such as a Supreme Court ruling may damage marriage in our own generation, and this will cause much pain in lives and in families, but long after the Supreme Court has gone the way of the world, marriage will still stand—maybe to our eyes it is hidden behind perverted images of marriage invented by councils of men and women in our own generation, maybe it is hard to find in all our world's sin and self-centeredness and lust of our, but it is still there, it is still the Lord's gift for every person to hold on to, it is still to be rejoiced in even by those not given, themselves, to be married, for we need have no fear that what is instituted by the Lord may ever be truly done away with.

But we fear.

We see things attacked around us, and we are anxious. Can a political march or demonstration, or a new regulation, or a new ruling change what God has created, what he has instituted?

The Supreme could, one supposes, rule against, for example, gravity? Would gravity then just float away

into the atmosphere?

Shall we wait for a person who is tired of being tied down to the ground, tired of having to walk and not being able to just soar into the sky like a bird—shall we wait for that person to bring the lawsuit to have the court rule that gravity is discriminatory against those who wish to hover, and that no one can be tied down by gravity? Do we not know that this would change gravity not one bit?

If people followed the court's ruling that there is no gravity, it will cause great confusion, much pain—bridges won't be designed to bear weight, so a lot of people will end up hurt, nothing will quite work right, so we'll end up losing family members to accidents; but in the end, gravity will still be there, despite the court's redesign, and after the pain and torn up lives, people will again know of gravity.

These things put in place by our Lord's Word, things of the created order such as gravity, such as procreation, such as marriage and family, they will remain. It all depends upon the Word out of the mouth of God.

Psalm 56:3:

³ When I am afraid, I put my trust in you.

⁴ In God, whose word I praise, in God I trust;

I shall not be afraid. What can flesh do to me?

These things put in place by God's Word, these things of the orders of creation, of the natural order or natural law as it's referred to in Philosophy, they endure.

And when we see them under attack, when we see the pain brought to society and to our neighbor, we don't despair as if the orders of creation can be thrown away like last week's video game, but we pray to our Lord, we intercede for our neighbor, that all may be brought back from the destruction and returned to the gifts established by the Lord's Word. We intercede for our neighbor and our society knowing that the Lord who created all things, is also he who redeemed all things by the shedding of his own blood.

He is the One who came among us to see our fear, our confusion when things around us are being torn at, and he told us to have no fear, Matthew 10:28:

²⁸ **Do not fear those who kill the body but cannot kill the soul. Rather fear him who can destroy both soul and body in Hell.**

Here is the One for you and me to fear—the One who can cast into Hell.

Don't fear the violent man looking for blood—he can do harm and bring death, but cannot cast you into Hell.

Don't fear the great designers sitting in council chambers attempting to redesign human nature and force all into compliance—they can bring much pain and human oppression, but cannot cast you into Hell.

Don't fear Satan and the demons as they tempt into sin and turn people against one another in accusation and division—they can bring into affliction and guilt and confusion, but cannot cast you into Hell.

Only God can cast you into Hell.

And he is the One who came into the flesh to be with us in our fear, to take our sin upon himself, to redeem us with his Own blood, to defeat death and the demons in his resurrection, and he is the One who shows us his hands with the prints of nails by which he ransomed us from all fear and death, and he says, **Fear not.**

Fear not. That is the promise to you of sins forgiven, of a life redeemed by the blood of Jesus, of a conscience purified of all guilt and shame in the cleansing of Baptism.

We know the fear and anxiety around us in our world. Just say a word such as “marriage” and you can feel the anxiety spike off the charts.

When we see the rear in our world, we need not strike out against those who are doing damage. That would be for us to act in fear. But we are given to speak gently to them of our Lord's gifts, to pray for them, commending them to the Lord, that they might hear his Word of kindness and would know of his gifts.

When we see people brought into confusion about our Lord's gifts, people searching for answers, even families torn-apart by our world's temptations, we commend them to our Lord, knowing that he loves them, and we pray that they would hear his Word bestowing all gifts.

When we see the anxiety in our world, the hurt families, and we see those bringing unhealthy teachings, and those drawn in by these manmade doctrines, we are given to know that our struggle is not against our neighbor, not against flesh and blood, but is against the powers and principalities of this age, that is, against the devil and his demons.

And yet we fear them not.

For we fear only him who can cast us into Hell. And that is only God himself. And when God revealed his disposition toward us, and as he continues revealing himself to us in his Gospel, we are given to see that the only One we are to fear, is he who raises up his hands which have the nail prints of the crucifixion, and he blesses us, telling us, **Fear not ... even the hairs of your head are all numbered.** ³¹ **Fear not, therefore; you are of more value than many sparrows.**

IN THE NAME OF JESUS.