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11th Sunday after Pentecost
Sermons
August 8, 2010

LUKE 12:22 - 34 "FEAR NOT, LITTLE FLOCK"

We are the flock of Christ here in this place. We have been baptized in the name of the Father and of the Son and of the Holy Spirit. We have been called to trust in Christ and follow Him by the working of the Holy Spirit in the Gospel. Christ our Shepherd feeds, tends, and protects us here through His Word; He faithfully provides all that we need. We, the people of Holy Spirit Lutheran Church, are little flock of Christ in this place.

Yet the little flock of Christ is found not only here at Holy Spirit Lutheran Church, but wherever the Gospel is proclaimed and Baptism and the Lord's Supper are administered in accordance with Christ's will and command; for through these means of grace are instruments of the Holy Spirit by which He works to call and gather sinners to Christ and keeps them in the true faith.

The little flock of Christ has existed through all the ages up to the present day. Adam and Eve were called into the little flock of Christ, when God promised that the Seed of the woman would crush the head of the serpent. Abraham was called into the little flock of Christ when God called him and promised to bless him and all the peoples of the earth through his Seed. The children of Israel were called into the little flock of Christ through the exodus from Egypt. Peter, James, John, the rest of the Twelve and the first disciples of Jesus were called into the little flock of Christ when Jesus said to them, "Follow Me." And ever since Jesus' death and resurrection the Spirit has called sinners into the little flock of Christ and kept them through Baptism, the preaching of the Word, and the partaking of the Lord's Supper.

We are called the little flock of Christ, not so much because we are small in numbers (even though we are here at Holy Spirit Lutheran), but we are little in the sense of dependence upon God our Father and Jesus our Shepherd. (The Christian Church throughout the ages is great and vast in numbers, in the billions.) We are little lambs, little children, that constantly require the loving care and attention of our Shepherd and Father to keep us from harm and danger. We are called little because fear, anxiety, and worry often overtake us.

God has ordered the world in such a way that we receive many of our human necessities through the economy, the exchange, production, and distribution of goods, services, and resources in a given area. Responsible adults work in various occupations and in exchange for their labor wages are paid them. We in turn use these wages to purchase resources that our families need like food, drink, clothing, and shelter. When the economy is good our wages are good; we can afford more things than what we and our families need. We tend to feel good, relaxed, and comfortable in

such an environment. But when there is a break or a perceived hiccup in the economy fear and anxiety start to set in.

When the economy is troubled the cost of living rises but wages are lagging. More work must be done for less return and this causes us to worry and fear. When businesses lay off workers or close down, we become very anxious and fearful because our daily bread seems to be in jeopardy. We then become fearful of the changes we may have to make; changes to our lifestyle; moving to find a new job; the amount time to find a new job; will I like the new job and get along with the people there; will I be able to make it work; and on and on.

Fear and anxiety often grip us in midst of daily life, as we seek to provide good and necessary things for our families and those entrusted to our care. Will my children get the sound education they need? Will the kids be safe and healthy? Will we have enough money for collage? Will we have enough money for retirement? Will we be able to maintain the lifestyle we are presently living? What changes might we have to make? Will we really have enough food, drink, clothing, and shelter? Where is everything going to come from and when?

Fear and anxiety about these things can actually paralyze us from taking any kind of action, from doing what we need to do. Fear and anxiety can push us to work too hard; drive us to unhealthy obsessions; and make us irritable and angry toward others. Fear and anxiety can alienate us from other people, especially those whom we live with and are closest to; it should not surprise us that conflicts over money are a leading reason for divorce in America. Fear and anxiety over things we need can even alienate us from God and the good gifts He desires to give us; such is the essence of sin.

Jesus our tender loving Shepherd would not have us live in constant fear and anxiety concerning the things we need to live. Jesus would not have us focus our time, energy, and attention solely upon gaining goods and resources for ourselves and our families. Jesus would not have us seeking out the fleeting treasures and pleasures of this fallen, corrupt, and dying world. Jesus would have us seek and treasure the good and heavenly gifts of the Father that come to us through His kingly reign in Christ.

22 And He said to His disciples, "On account of this I say to you; do not be anxious with regard to life, what you shall eat, nor in regard to the body, what you shall wear. 23 For life is more than food and the body more than clothing. 24 Consider the ravens that they do not sow nor reap, for whom there is no inner room or barn, and God feeds them; how much more you are of value than birds. 25 And who from you is able by being anxious to add upon the span of his life an hour? 26 Therefore if you are not able to do the smallest of things, why are you anxious concerning the rest? 27 Consider the lilies how they grow; they do not toil nor spin; but I say to you Solomon in all his glory was not clothed as one of these. 28 And if God clothes the grass which is here today and tomorrow it is being cast into the furnace, in this way, how much more you, of little faith. 29 And you do not seek what you will eat and what you will drink and do not be anxious; 30 for all these things the nations of the world are seeking, but your Father knows that you need these things.

Jesus reminds us, His disciples, that our life and existence is far more than eating, drinking, clothing, and working to secure such things. Jesus reassures us, His

little flock that we have no need to fear and be anxious concerning our daily bodily needs because God our Father in Christ knows we have need of these things and is gracious to supply them.

Jesus calls our attention to God the Father's provision for ravens and lilies. God created them and gave them life and continues to provide all they need for life. Ravens and lilies don't go without the things they need for life and they are far less important to God than you are! God did not create ravens and lilies in His image and likeness, but He created you and all human beings in His image and likeness. God has not called ravens and lilies to be part of the Christ's little flock, but by the working of the Holy Spirit in the Gospel, God has called you! God loves and cares for you far, far, far, more than He loves and cares for ravens and lilies; He shall indeed provide for you all that you need!

Just think of all God provided for Abraham. God called Abraham out of his pagan past, away from his homeland, away from the security of the known, to be His child, a member of Christ's little flock, and walk by faith. God promised to bless Abraham and all families of the earth through his offspring; God promised that his offspring from his own body would be as numerous as the stars in the heavens. And God made good on all His promises to Abraham.

The Scripture says, "Abraham believed God and it was reckoned to him as righteousness." Yet Abraham was not without his doubts, fears and anxiety along the way. The Scriptures record three separate occasions when fear, anxiety and the resultant doubt got the better of Abraham: two times because he thought his life and possessions were in danger of being taken away by kings, Abraham said Sarah his wife was only his sister and allowed her to be taken; and once filled with anxiety and doubt concerning when his offspring was to be born, he slept with Sarah's slave girl to secure a child. But God remained faithful to His Word and promises to Abraham despite Abraham's fear, anxiety, and doubt. In fact in each case God blessed Abraham with more and more earthly goods.

You see God's reign, His kingly activity over all creation, had come to Abraham through God's call and promise. God's reign, His mighty acts, provided all that Abraham needed and overflowed in an abundance of blessing. God's reign, His saving acts, delivered Abraham from the danger of his enemies and his own sinful fear, anxiety, and doubt. If God was faithful to His promises to Abraham, He is certainly faithful to keep His promises to you through Jesus Christ His Son.

God's reign, His kingly activity, entered this world fully, humbly, mysteriously, and powerfully in Jesus, Son of God and son of man; fully divine and fully human. Where ever, Jesus went there God in His fullness was present. Whenever Jesus spoke, it was the Word of God. Whatever Jesus did, it was God acting. When Jesus suffered and died on the cross, there God was redeeming you from sin and the devil. When Jesus was raised on the third day, there God had defeated death and all our enemies. God's reign, His kingly activity, has come in Jesus; where Jesus is, there is God's reign.

Jesus is present here in Worship bringing God's reign to us. Jesus is present in Baptism in the name of the Father and of the Son and of the Holy Spirit to forgive us and make us part of His little flock. Jesus is present in the Word proclaimed in Absolution, the Sermon, and the reading of the Scriptures. Jesus is present in His body and blood to forgive and renew us, to bring God's reign to us.

Jesus says to us: 31 Nevertheless seek His reign, and these things shall be added to you. 32 Fear not, little flock, for your Father is well pleased to give to you the reign. 33 Sell your possessions and give alms; make for yourselves money bags that do not wear out, unfailing treasure in the heavens, where thief does not come near nor moth destroy; 34 for where your treasure is there your heart shall be also."

Did you hear Jesus' promise for you? *"Nevertheless seek His reign, and these things shall be added to you. Fear not, little flock, for your Father is well pleased to give to you the reign."* This is Jesus' promise for you, because you have been baptized in the name of the Father and of the Son and of the Holy Spirit; because you have been baptized in Christ Jesus' death and resurrection; because even you are His disciple, a member of Christ's little flock. God's reign has come to you in Christ granting forgiveness, freedom, and life.

God the Father is well pleased to give you and me His reign come in Christ; He is eager to give us His good gifts. God calls and gathers us to Worship by the Holy Spirit in order to seek His reign in Christ. God knows your need, your sin. God knows your fear, anxiety, and doubt. God has provided you with a feast of forgiveness; the King servers you His body and blood. God knows your need for food, drink, clothing, and shelter; He gives these things to you now and promises you resurrection life in Christ, where no one hungers, thirsts, goes naked, or is without a home. God knows you; He created you and called you in Baptism to be His very own, a member of Christ's little flock.

Fear not little flock of Christ; fear not! Give to those in need. Love and serve your neighbor. Be faithful in your vocations. Food, drink, and clothing are not your life; Christ is your life! Seek first God's reign in Christ and all these things shall be added unto you, amen!