

Pentecost 4 6/25/23
 Matthew 10:5a, 21-33 7A

“SO HAVE NO FEAR OF THEM.”

P. 321: What is the 1st Commandment?

What does this mean?

The 1st Commandment teaches that we are to “fear, love, and trust in God above all things.” Well, ok, we should fear God above all things, but do we? Honestly, no, we do not. We fear men more than God. Or, to put it even more bluntly, we fear what people will think of us.

Our lesson for this Sunday is all about that very thing -- the FEAR that a Christian has from living in a sinful world. The world hated Christ and it hates all who confess His holy name. Yet, our lesson has Good News for us today. Our lesson assures us that we are not defenseless, rather quite the opposite, we have the best defense of all -- the Triune God, who says to us today, “HAVE NO FEAR.” In fact, translated more correctly, the words of Jesus really are, “Do not even begin to fear!”

Jesus Christ came to this world from heaven to redeem this world from sin, death, and hell. However, this world rejected Him, because the people saw no need for a Savior. He came to His own people but Bible tells us, *His own people did not receive Him (Jn 1:11)*. When He proclaimed to them the Word of God, they did not like it. They were filled with such anger that they once *they...drove Him out of the town and brought Him to the brow of the hill on which their town was built, so that they could throw him down the cliff (Lk 4:29)*. When they saw the works He did to show that He was the Messiah, they said, *“He has a demon and is insane” (Jn 10:20)*. Even His own family, his brothers and sisters, rejected Him, saying, *“He is out of His mind” (Mk 3:21)*. In His earthly life, Jesus

endured not only poverty, but contempt, persecution, and, finally, crucifixion and death.

In baptism, we are united to the Lord Jesus Christ. All that is His becomes ours. His death becomes ours so that we will never die again. His resurrection becomes ours, so that the grave cannot hold us captive. His righteousness becomes ours, so that we are pleasing to our Father in heaven. His home of heaven becomes our home. And, and, the hatred of a sinful, fallen world becomes ours, too.

"A disciple is not above his teacher, nor a servant above his master...If they have called the master of the house Beelzebul (ie, the prince of the devils), how much more will they malign those of his household," Jesus says (v. 24, 25). Jesus is our teacher and we are His disciples. He is our master and we are His servants. As He faced ridicule, rejection, finally death at the hands of the sinful world, we can expect nothing less in this vale of tears.

But, Jesus says, *"Have no fear of them; Do not even begin to fear!"* I have always found it fascinating that every time God says to us in the Bible not to fear, He gives us the reason not to be afraid. Look at our lesson this morning.

First, Christ says to us do not fear failure. He says it this way, *"...for nothing is covered that will not be revealed, or hidden that will not be known. What I tell you in the dark, say in the light, and what you hear whispered, proclaim on the housetops"* (vv. 26-27). Jesus is saying is that we are to boldly preach and teach the Word He has taught us.

But, we must always remember the words of St. Paul, *The time is coming when people will not endure sound teaching, but having itching ears they will accumulate for themselves teachers to suit their own*

passions (2 Tm 4:3). Because itching ears do not want to hear the Word of God, we are tempted to remain silent **or** even tell itching ears what they want to hear. Why? Because we fear men, we fear they won't like us – more than we fear God.

My Friends, Christ is our prophet, who proclaimed the Word of God to us. As our prophet, He continues to send people to proclaim the saving Gospel. That's you and me. We should not permit ourselves to be frightened by the strength of the opposition, but preach the Word courageously and boldly, for God Himself has promised us that His Word will not return empty (cf. Is 55:11).

Next, Christ says to us do not fear death. He says it this way, *“Do not fear those who kill the body but cannot kill the soul”* (v. 28).

We live in a great land. Because of the freedom we enjoy, we do not face imprisonment or death for confessing Christ. But, even though we do not face martyrdom for confessing Christ, our fear of men and what they might do to us for confessing Jesus remains.

But, once again, the Words of Christ come. United to Christ, we are united in His victory over death. Our hearts cherish His words, *“Because I live, you also will live”* (Jn 14:19). The grave holds no terror for us. The fear of death does not hinder us nor enslave us. Our fear of death does not stop us from confessing Christ.

Lastly, Christ says to us, “Do not fear want.”

Jesus teaches us to pray, “Give us this day our daily bread.” Jesus teaches us to pray these words so that we realize that our entire life depends on God, we look to God for all blessings of body as well as soul, and we receive all blessings with thanksgiving.

But, the weakness of our mortal flesh causes us to doubt God's love

and His Fatherly care for us. In the midst of the trials and afflictions of this life, we are tempted to fear that we will not receive our daily bread.

Our God is the Creator and Provider who gives us all that we need to sustain this life. He even gives life to sparrows and sustains them. God knows you so well that He even knows how many hairs are on your head. Because God knows us that intimately, He knows what we need, even better than you do. God opens His Fatherly hand to give us what we need to support this body and life.

United to Christ, we do not even begin to fear. Rather, we "**GO LIVE!**" "Go, live," as the little Christ God has made you in your baptism. Then, you will confess Christ with your thoughts, words, and deeds. And, we have His own gracious promise: *"Everyone who acknowledges Me before men, I also will acknowledge before my Father in heaven"* (v. 32).

We confess Christ with all of our life. Everything that we do is to the glory of God. The father confesses Christ when he teaches God's Word to his children. That same father confesses Christ when he honors, loves and cherishes his wife. We confess Christ in the way we spend our time, the movies we watch, the way as children we talk to our parents, the way as parents we talk to our children. We confess Christ by the way we manage the money God has entrusted to us. Everything that we do is a confession of Christ.

We cannot allow fear, fear of men, fear of the devil or fear of this sinful world, to silence our confession of Jesus Christ. Christ has conquered all these foes. And, united to Him in Baptism, we share His victory. Living in Christ, strengthened by His grace as we hear His Word and eat His Body and Blood, we **GO LIVE**, we live as who we are -- new creations in Christ, doing the will of our Father.

In the words of our Introit, "In God I trust; I shall not be afraid."