

11th Sunday after Pentecost C (8/8/10 – *You Have Nothing to Fear*)

In the Name of JESUS. [Amen]

You Have Nothing to Fear! That is the message our Lord Jesus Christ would have you ponder and take home with you this day, dear children of our heavenly Father. ***You Have Nothing to Fear!***

But we do, do we not? Fear, that is. Too easily we become anxious about so many things, so many little things – unimportant things really. *But I have a right to be afraid*, you insist. The economy continues to be quite recessed – some might even say **depressed**. (It certainly can be depressing.)

Just the other day I had to catch myself being anxious and afraid – again. And I had already begun to study this Word of our Lord for today. We got some difficult news at our Preschool. The county would no longer reimburse us for seven out of our twenty-three students. We had to call parents and explain why we could no longer keep their children unless they could pay. We had to let one teacher go – and cut the hours of another. Even then it seemed that, financially, things might not work out. It was then that I became more than just a little bit concerned – anxious and afraid even. Would we be able to continue proclaiming the Gospel to the children of our community through our Preschool? Would we have to let other teachers go – make their lives difficult? Would we end up closing? Had we made a wrong decision about installing a solar system? What would the future be?

And all the time I was asking such questions – worried and anxious and fearful – this Word of Christ was still ringing in my ear. ***Life is more than food, and the body more than clothing*** [12.23]. ***Of how much more value are you than the birds!*** [12.24b] ***If God so clothes the grass, which is alive in the field today, and tomorrow is thrown into the oven, how much more will He clothe you, O you of little faith!*** [12.28] ***Seek His Kingdom, and these things will be added to you*** [12.31]. ***Fear not, little flock, for it is your Father's good pleasure to give you the Kingdom*** [LK 12.32].

I have no doubt that you have your own anxious, fearful moments. Is it because of your health – or the health of a loved one? Are you also worried

about the economy ... or the seeming ever-increasing **immorality** of the world ... or the future in general – perhaps all of the above? That is simply part of our fallen, sinful flesh. Not only do we fail to fear and love God as we ought – we fail to trust Him as well.

Of course, lack of anxiety about our lives does **not** mean that we get to just sit back and wait for everything to be dropped in our lap. ***If anyone will not work, neither shall he eat*** the Lord says through St. Paul [2TH 3.10]. There are times when work is not readily available – like now ... especially in some vocations. But even then, God calls us to labor in what we are able. We do have a certain responsibility for our lives. We need to prioritize the essentials. Give for the work of the Kingdom. Cover the basics of food, clothing, and shelter for ourselves as well as for those whom God has made us responsible. Set aside a bit for emergencies. Not live beyond our means and then expect someone else to bail us out. We need to have a Godly influence within the realm into which God has placed us to live out our Christian lives. But when we have done all that God expects of us – whether it be in providing food and clothes or in the area of morality – then we must leave the results to God and trust in Him to work His good in His perfect way and time.

Our fear and anxiousness over things great and small are indications of the littleness of our faith. They are indications of our sinful lack of trust in the God, Who created and continually sustains all things. They betray a lack of faith in the promises we have heard just today. And **that** is what we really need to fear – the littleness of our faith!

The remedy for our sinful fear and anxiety is the steadfast, loving promises of our Lord. It is the Word that we hear this day ... and the visible Word of the Sacrament, in which our ever-present Lord comes to us in His eternal Body and Blood – given and shed and risen from the grave to give us forgiveness, life, and salvation ... to give us the Kingdom. Hear the Word of God's promises – to Abraham ... to the disciples ... to you. Hear God's Holy Word and know its fulfillment – down to the last detail.

Abraham heard the promise of God – but for a time the littleness of his

human faith worried about the fulfillment. *Fear not, Abram, I am your Shield; your reward shall be very great*, said the LORD [GEN 15.1]. Abraham lived for a time by sight rather than faith. *O Lord GOD, what will You give me, for I continue childless, and the heir of my house is Eliezer of Damascus?* [15.2] God called Abram from his home to a new land with the promise that he would be a great nation ... and a blessing to all nations. But years later Abraham still had no son. He could not yet see the fulfillment. In the midst of apparent lack, Abraham's faith became little. He was worried and anxious and fearful – despite the other abundant blessings God had poured out upon him.

God gave Abraham another promise. *Look toward heaven, and number the stars, if you are able to number them. ... So shall your offspring be. And [Abraham] believed the LORD, and He counted it to him as righteousness.* [GEN 15.5-6] We know the rest of the story. Isaac ... Jacob ... Joseph. Abraham's offspring became the nation of Israel – numbering in the millions by the time of the Exodus from Egypt. And in every circumstance, the Lord provided for them – food from heaven ... and clothing that did not wear out for forty years. *Fear not, little flock, for it is your Father's good pleasure to give you the Kingdom* [LK 12.32]. *You Have Nothing to Fear!*

But more importantly, in Abraham's Offspring – namely, Jesus Christ – **all** the nations have indeed been blessed. You have the forgiveness of your sins, abundant life, and eternal salvation in Christ the Lord. And since we are all children of Abraham by means of receiving an Abrahamic faith, Abraham's *descendants* are, indeed, *as many as the stars of heaven and as the innumerable grains of sand by the seashore* [HEB 11.12]. God has fulfilled His promise – despite all circumstances that might seem contrary.

So it is with you, dear Christian. *You Have Nothing to Fear!* You are worth much to God than the birds [12.24b]. God makes you more glorious than the lilies of the field [12.28]. *For life is more than food, and the body more than clothing* [12.23]. What is that *more*? God gives you not only what you need for your physical life – *daily bread* ... all that you need to

support this body and life – but also and more importantly all that you need for **eternal** life. He gives you His Holy Word that tastes sweeter than honey [PSA 119.103] – since it reveals and offers to you the pure sweetness of the Gospel ... the declaration that your littleness of faith and all your sins are forgiven for Jesus' sake. ***You Have Nothing to Fear!*** God gives you Christ – Who has taken away all your sin by His Cross. He gives you life – true life, abundant life, eternal life – through the life of His Son.

And are you clothed in a manner more glorious than Solomon? Are you arrayed better than the lilies of the field? Here is ***more*** indeed! For without any toiling or spinning on your part – apart from any deeds of the Law ... any merit or worthiness in you – the Father has clothed you in nothing less than the perfect holiness and righteousness of His Son, Jesus Christ, our Lord. ***For as many of you as have been baptized into Christ have put on Christ*** [GAL 3.27]. And in time, the Lord will reveal to you your glorious garb. In time, you will stand ***before the throne and before the Lamb, clothed in white robes*** – robes washed and made ***white in the blood of the Lamb*** [REV 7.13, 14].

Moreover, your gracious God also gives you the greater food of the Body and Blood of your Savior in, with, and under the Bread and the Wine of the Sacrament. Here before the Altar your Lord and Master dresses Himself for service and bids you recline at His Table. Here the Son comes and serves you with the Daily Bread that comes down from heaven to eat [JN 6.31] – Manna from above – that nourishes your soul ... and joins His immortal Body to your mortal ... such that in Him you also shall be immortal.

You Have Nothing to Fear! For, this foretaste of the eternal, heavenly Wedding Feast to come assures you of the certainty of your future – a future without worry or fear or anxiety. So ***be ready, for the Son of Man is coming at an hour you do not expect*** [LK 12.40] – indeed, He comes even now ... and is already here ... to clothe you and feed you again with His forgiveness and life. ***Fear not, little flock, for it is your Father's good pleasure to give you the Kingdom*** – already now and even forevermore.

In the Name of the FATHER and of the ✠ SON and of the HOLY SPIRIT. [Amen]