

DO NOT BE AFRAID.

(John 14:15-21, 25-27; 1 Peter 3:13-22)

Let Us Pray:

Back when the telegraph was the fastest means of long-distance communication, there was a story, perhaps apocryphal, about a young man who applied for a job as a Morse code operator. Answering an ad in the newspaper, he went to the address that was listed. When he arrived, he entered a large, noisy office. In the background a telegraph clacked away. A sign on the receptionist's counter instructed job applicants to fill out a form and wait until they were summoned to enter the inner office.

The young man completed his form and sat down with seven other waiting applicants. After a few minutes, the young man stood up, crossed the room to the door of the inner office, and walked right in. Naturally the other applicants perked up, wondering what was going on. Why had this man been so bold? They muttered among themselves that they hadn't heard any summons yet. They took more than a little satisfaction in assuming the young man who went into the office would be reprimanded for his presumption and summarily disqualified for the job.

Within a few minutes the young man emerged from the inner office escorted by the interviewer, who announced to the other applicants, **"Gentlemen, thank you very much for coming, but the job has been filled by this young man."**

The other applicants began grumbling to each other, and then one spoke up, **"Wait a minute--I don't understand. He was the last one to come in, and we never even got a chance to be interviewed. Yet he got the job. That's not fair."**

The employer responded, **"All the time you've been sitting here, the telegraph has been clacking out the following message in Morse code: `IF YOU UNDERSTAND THIS MESSAGE, THEN COME RIGHT IN. THE JOB IS YOURS.'** None of you HEARD it or UNDERSTOOD it. This young man did. So the job is his."

Just as this man's livelihood depended on his ability to hear and understand Morse code, so also our livelihood, as a matter of fact our whole life now and life in eternity, depends on our ability to hear and understand the meaning of our Baptism, and what God said to us there when he declared: **"YOU ARE MY CHILD, WHOM I LOVE!"**

It's very important that we hear and understand, because we tend to forget so quickly and easily! And so the Holy Spirit reminds us [Romans 6:3,4]:

Don't you know that all of us who were baptized into Christ Jesus were baptized into his death? We were therefore buried with him through baptism into death in order that, just as Christ was raised from the dead through the glory of the Father, we too may live a new life.

Through the Prophet Isaiah 43:1,2,5 we are reminded of the blessing involved.

"Do not fear, for I have redeemed you; I have called you by name; you are mine. When you pass through the waters, I will be with you; and when you pass through the rivers, they will not sweep over you. When you walk through the fire, you will not be burned; the flames will not set you ablaze. . . . Do not be afraid, for I am with you."

And in our Gospel today he repeats this promise:

"Peace I leave with you; my peace I give you. I do not give to you as the world gives. Do not let your hearts be troubled and do not be afraid."

Do not be Afraid

These are some of the most common words in scripture, found over 70 times in the Bible, and beautifully summed up in Psalm 50:15:

"Call upon me in the day of trouble; I will deliver you, and you will honour me."

"Do not be Afraid!" is not a call to have a "stiff upper lip."

It's the Holy Spirit's call to remember and understand the inheritance that is yours when God, in baptism, joined you to Christ's death and resurrection and declared: "***YOU ARE MY CHILD, WHOM I LOVE!***"

What an amazing thing for God to say about us, especially when you consider that God is holy and so should we be but are not! We were born in sin! This is how the Psalm of David [Ps 51:5] puts it:

"Surely I was sinful at birth, sinful from the time my mother conceived me."

No wonder even the apostle Paul, who thought he had kept God's law's to the smallest detail, had to admit [Rom 3:23]:

"All have sinned and fall short of the glory of God."

And it's a truth that no amount of wishful thinking can erase. Like claiming:

"I haven't killed anyone" . . . "I haven't stolen." . . . "I'm a lot better than some of those people around me."

And then proceed to point out your sterling qualities.

"All have sinned and fall short of the glory of God."

We need to realise that God holds **TWO SINS** against us.

Through the prophet **Jeremiah**[2:13] God says this:

“My people have committed two sins:

- 1. They have forsaken me, the spring of living water, and***
- 2. Have dug their own cistern, broken cisterns that cannot hold water.”***

We all, in one way or another have dug, and more often than not continue to dig, our own broken and empty cisterns:

We turn to our own solutions rather than to what God offers us!

But, in spite of all this, still we are told **“Do not be afraid.”**

Why not be afraid? ***Because God loves us!***

“For God so loved the world that he gave his one and only Son, that whoever believes in him shall not perish but have eternal life. For God did not send his Son into the world to condemn the world, but to save the world through him”

John 3:16,17

Through Isaiah God reminds us:

“Fear not, for I have redeemed you; I have called you by name; you are mine.”

God says to us today:

Because I love you, I give my Son in exchange for your life!

Because I love you my Son has taken on your guilt and set you free!

This is the love that you and I, we all, have been reborn into, and inherited in Baptism, when the Spirit was poured out on you and God declared:

“YOU ARE MY CHILD, WHOM I LOVE!”

You can know with certainty that God is with you and for you, and you have the indwelling of the Spirit to witness to this truth! So what possible harm can befall you? As the apostle Paul says [Rom 8:31,32] :

“If God is for us, who can be against us? He who did not spare his own Son, but gave him up for us all - how will he not also, along with him, give us all things?”

He who called you in holy baptism, he to whom you belong, whose beloved child you are, and whose Spirit continues to invite you to come to him with all your needs, continues to assure you:

“I will not leave you comfortless.

I will send to you the Holy Spirit, the Comforter.” [KJ]

The Holy Spirit comfort you with the assurance that God says to you:

“Fear not, for I have redeemed you;

I have called you by name; you are mine.

Amen.

The peace of God, which passes all understanding, keep your hearts and minds in Christ Jesus. Amen.

Sermon by Pastor John Simboras

17 May 2020