

SERMON: March 17, 2019

TOPIC: "FEAR NOT—GOD IS OUR SHIELD"

According to the NRSV Concordance, the phrase "fear not" is used fifty eight times in the Bible. For our purposes today, let me high-light a few for us:

--Isaiah 41: 10: "Do not fear for I am with you. Do not be dismayed, for I am Your God. I will strengthen you. I will help you. I will uphold you with the right hand of my righteousness. –Psalm 27: 1— " The LORD is my Light and my Salvation; whom shall I fear? The LORD is the strength of my life; of whom shall I be afraid?" –Luke 1: 30: The angel said to Mary—"Do not be afraid, for you have found favor with God. You will conceive and bear a Son..." –Mark 6: 6b: The young man in the tomb said to Mary--: " Do not be alarmed. You are looking for Jesus of Nazareth. He is not here. He is risen. The women fled and were afraid." –Genesis 15: 1 – "The word of the LORD came to Abram in a vision and said: "Fear not Abram! I am a SHIELD to you! Your reward is very great..."

In Luke 13: 34b we see a demonstration of fearlessness of human authority in Christ in His response to some Pharisees who came and told Him to leave town because Herod was plotting to kill him. Apparently, He was supposed to be afraid and flee. But Jesus stood His ground. **(When did anyone see or hear the Pharisees trying to be nice to Jesus and to protect Him?)** Jesus wept over Jerusalem saying how He longed to gather them and protect them as a hen gathered her brood under her wings, but they would not come near. They were rebellious and would not listen. They were well known for killing the prophets and those who were sent to warn them and to help them. Jesus told the Pharisees to go back to THAT FOX, (Herod) and tell him words to the effect: "I am not leaving town. I will not flee to the mountains. I have my Father's work to do and will continue to heal the sick, deliver the demon possessed, preach, and teach; and on the third day I will be finished." (Subtle reference to His resurrection?) Herod may have considered Himself king; but Jesus was the King of all kings. In fact, Jesus declared that there will come a time when those who rejected Him will say: **"Blessed is he who comes in the name of the LORD!"**

Jesus would not allow Himself to be intimidated. He knew His purpose and authority, and He trusted in His Father. He stood firm and unafraid of human beings. We hear Paul speaking to the church at Philippi (Chap. 3: 17-4:1) and

exhorting them with tears to keep their minds on the eternal heavenly things and to remember that their citizenship is not of this world but in the heavenly kingdom where Christ Jesus is and from whence He will return. It is He who has all authority and power to transform our mortal bodies and conform us to the body of His Glory. Keep this in mind for this is what is vital and most important. THEREFORE, BELOVED ONES, STAND FIRM IN HIM AND DO NOT BE AFRAID. HAVE CONFIDENCE IN THE ONE TO WHOM ALL THINGS ARE MADE SUBJECT. AND DO NOT BE AS THOSE WHO ARE ENEMIES OF THE CROSS.

I believe the Holy Spirit is encouraging us and the church at large to be strong and be of a good courage. Pray with faith and do not be afraid despite what is going on around us. Imitate Jesus and ignore the “FOX” who seems to be ranting and raving and blowing smoke in order to intimidate others into submission and fear. I declare that the devil is a liar, a thief, a murderer, and a deceiver who comes to kill, to steal, and to destroy. But Christ has come to give life and to give it more abundantly and eternally. Besides, according to the Scripture: -We are more than conquerors through Him who loved us and gave Himself for us. Through faith in the power of the Blood of Christ Jesus, by the power of His Holy Name, and by the power of His Cross we are encouraged to stand firm. Know that it is in Him that we live and move and have our being. He is our Solid Rock on whom we stand. Let’s not let this truth go in one ear and out the other; but let us think on it often. Meditate on it and get it riveted in our mind and heart for keeps. Then we will strengthen our courage to rise above the fear-mongering of the “Herods” and “Pharisees of this world and of these times.

We are presented with another courageous and fearless man of faith in Genesis 15: This is Abram. He had a visitation with the Heavenly Father. Abram had just returned victoriously from the battle to deliver his nephew, Lot. Upon returning victoriously, Abram gave a tithe to the Priest Melchizedek in gratitude and thanksgiving unto God. The name “Melchizedek” means—King of Righteousness. Scholars believe that this Priest Abram encountered is a pre-figure of Christ Jesus before He came in flesh. **Abram recognized that he did not win the battle by himself. He knew that the mighty hand of the Almighty God won him the victory. After Abram gave thanks, by tithing to this priest Jehovah God, appeared to him in a vision and said: “Fear not Abram, I am a Shield to you; Your reward shall be very great.”** The LORD was obviously pleased with Abram’s

courage and strength as well as his faith and confidence in winning the battle; but I believe God was even more pleased with His attitude of gratitude and in giving glory to God for victory over his enemies.

Abram was once called “FRIEND” by Jehovah God. He had a special and close relationship with the LORD. So, when God promised to reward him greatly, Abram was not afraid to ask what the LORD would do for him seeing he had no heir. What was to be this great reward? That’s when the LORD told him He would give him a son of his own and through him his generation and progenitors would become more numerous than the stars in the sky. The LORD “cut a covenant” with Abram but also told him that his family would find themselves under slavery in Egypt for a while. However, they would be delivered. The LORD knew Abram was trustworthy and faithful. He would continue to trust until things got worked out and be fulfilled. Is there anyone in leadership today on whom God could rely and trust to be like Abram? --A God-fearing person? --A wise and grateful person? – A person of truth and courage? May God reveal such people in our time, for we are badly in need of them! At the moment, everything seems to be running a-mock. It seems like chaos everywhere...globally and locally.

It is clear to me that the Scriptures and the Holy Spirit are calling the church to be strong, to be courageous, and not to be afraid. Stay focused on the faithful , strong, and powerful God of all creation. Despite all we are seeing and hearing, God is showing us what it means to place our confidence in the Father Almighty as Abram did, as Christ-the Son of God did when He was in the flesh, and as Paul did as he encouraged the church to imitate him, Christ Jesus, and those who are not the enemies of the Cross.

Especially in the social and political atmosphere of the nation today, the Herod’s of the world are plotting evil and pushing fear in order to destabilize the population. We see nature shaking, quaking, burning; and violence being perpetrated against mosques, synagogues, and churches; children being slaughtered in schools, and babies being ripped from their mother’s arms and taken away without a trace of their whereabouts. I believe Jehovah God in Trinity is urging His people to “FEAR NOT” AND TELLING US AS HE TOLD ABRAM: “I AM YOUR SHIELD!”—Fear not...stay hidden under Christ the Solid Rock. Remember as Paul told the church at Phillipi... Our citizenship is in heaven and not

on this earth. We are in the world but not of the world. We declare as David did in Psalm 46: "God is our refuge and strength, a very present help in trouble. Therefore, we will not fear though the earth be removed and the mountains be cast into the midst of the sea..." OR as Jehovah tells us in Isaiah 41: 10..."Fear thou not for I am with thee. Be not dismayed for I am your God. I will strengthen you. I will help you. I will uphold you with the right hand of my righteousness. The Word of God encourages us in Psalm 91: "He that dwells in the secret place of the Most High, shall abide under the shadow of the Almighty. We declare that Jehovah our God is our Refuge and our Fortress...Our God in whom we trust. So, we will tell that FOX AND HIS MESSENGERS THAT WE ARE STANDING ON THE SOLID ROCK. LIKE JESUS TOLD HEROD... HE HAS WORK TO DO AND HE IS GOING FINISH THE WORK OF HIS FATHER UNTIL THE THIRD DAY. The LORD does not want the Church to be afraid of Herod when we know the God of Abraham, Isaac, and Jacob, Mary, Elizabeth, and Deborah. Yet we will need to imitate Abram, and others of strong faith. WE WANT TO SHARE IN THE BLESSINGS OF ABRAHAM THAT TELL US THAT "JEHOVAH GOD IS OUR GREAT REWARD AND OUR SHIELD.

In these times of threats of racial and civil wars, gang style government, and fear – mongering... THE CHURCH IS ENCOURAGED BY THE WORD OF GOD AND BY THE SPIRIT OF CHRIST... TO NOT BE AFRAID FOR I AM WITH YOU AND I AM YOUR SHIELD! Will you believe and embrace this encouragement from the LORD? Will you stay steadfast and faithful to the only One who is in control of everything and everyone? Will you trust in the LORD in good times and in not so good times? OUR GOD IS A WAY MAKER, A DELIVERER, A MIRACLE WORKER, A STRONG TOWER; OUR GOD IS A PROTECTOR, A PROVIDER, ... SO FEAR NOT AND BE AT PEACE! OUR GOD IS A COVENANT KEEPING, PROMISE KEEPING GOD; A PROVIDER, A HEALER, TO THOSE WHO DILIGENTLY SEEK HIM. *(Song: Our God is and awesome God who reigns from heaven above, with wisdom, power and love...our God is an awesome God.)* Fear not: Jehovah God is our Shield and our great Reward.

Let us pray:

IN CHRIST NAME ---AMEN.