

Flipping for Jesus November 13, 2016 Luke 12:25-34

“Do not be afraid, little flock,” Jesus tells his disciples, *“for it is your Father’s good pleasure to give you the kingdom.”* Do not be afraid.

Can you think of any statement more contrary to the spirit of this time? A better bumper sticker might read, “Be afraid. Be very afraid.” The phrase comes from the 1986 horror film, *The Fly*. Regardless of one’s political leaning, this seems to capture the present moment.

What do we fear? We fear scarcity. Scarcity tells us there’s not enough.

In her book, *The Soul of Money*, Lynne Twist describes this fear of scarcity as “the great lie.” We wake up in the morning certain we didn’t get enough sleep. We go to bed at night terrified that we didn’t do enough. “This internal condition of scarcity,” Twist writes, “lives at the very heart of our jealousies, our greed, our prejudice, and our arguments with life...”¹ Contemporary life tells us to be afraid, to be very afraid.

The opposite of fear is not fearlessness. The opposite of fear is courage. The word “courage” is rooted in the Latin word for “heart.” The Holy Spirit fills our heart with God’s mercy and love. Courage is not immunity from fear. Courage is the refusal to let fear win.

So Jesus’ word for today is this: **Be brave. Be very brave.**

The opposite of scarcity is not abundance. The opposite of scarcity is enough. This is not about *having* enough. Instead, this is about *being* enough. Being enough is always a gift, not an accomplishment. Being enough is always about grace, not works. Being enough is always about receiving and never about stealing.

“Do not be afraid, little flock, for it is your Father’s good pleasure to give you the kingdom.” It’s the second half of the sentence that makes the first half possible.

We live on the promise that God wants to give us all good things. So these words are not rules or demands. God wants us rest from our worries. God wants us to keep our priorities straight. God frees us from the obsession with those things that do not bring real happiness. Rather, God offers us the “enough life” that comes from authentic community and right relationship with God and each other.

The opposite of scarcity is not abundance. It is enough. So Jesus’ word for today is this: **Be brave. Be very brave.**

How can we be so brave? We can be so brave because God has done enough. Jesus’ last words from the cross are often translated as, *“It is finished.”* But another way to translate that sentence is far better. “It is completed.” It is enough. Jesus’ death and resurrection are enough to save you, me and the whole universe. So scarcity doesn’t have to be so scary.

Be brave. Be very brave.

Jesus doesn't want us to miss when God comes in ways that might surprise us—in generosity instead of accumulation, in community instead of looking out for ourselves, in vulnerability and relationship rather than in strength. It's easy to miss the God who comes in love and grace when all we expect is law and punishment.

So come to the rail today for prayers. Bring your fears and failures, your anxiety and anguish, your wants and worries. Bring it all and leave it there. Walk away with hearts emptied of hurt and filled with hope. *“Do not be afraid, little flock, for it is your Father's good pleasure to give you the kingdom.”*

Be brave. Be very brave.

Then what? Our call as the church is to “flip the script.” Psychologists call it “non-complementary behavior.” You’ve probably done it. Two co-workers are having a knock-down, drag-out argument. Suddenly, you begin to laugh at the silliness of the whole situation. The fight stops, and your co-workers look at you like you’re crazy. Then they begin to laugh as well. And peace becomes possible.

Love your enemies. Pray for those who persecute you. Give to those in need. Embrace faith in the face of fear. Have hope in the face of despair. Flip the script. That’s how we change the world around us.

We can do that because God has flipped the script of all Creation. Death is swallowed up in life. Defeat is overcome with victory. Darkness disappears into light. That is the message of God’s victory in Jesus’ cross and resurrection. *“Do not be afraid, little flock, for it is your Father's good pleasure to give you the kingdom.”*

Be brave. Be very brave.

How do we do that? We prepare and practice. That’s what the last part of the reading is about. The preparation isn’t about being saved. God’s has that managed. It’s about being ready to serve when the call comes. We prepare through prayer and worship, through study and service, and in the midst of a community of servants.

We are free to give ourselves away, to care for others, to lose ourselves in service. Our courage and confidence come from God.

“Do not be afraid, little flock, for it is your Father's good pleasure to give you the kingdom.”

Be brave. Be very brave.

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ⁱ Twist, *The Soul of Money*, page 45.