

The title for today's message is; **Fear God and Be Fearless**

Jesus said; **The one who endures to the end will be saved.**

Grace and peace to you from God the Father and our Lord Jesus Christ.
Amen.

What do you fear? Spiders? Don't like how they scuttle along the floor in your living room and build webs in the corners of your garage and furnace room, or right where the light switch is?

Do you fear thunder and lightning? Does it send you running for cover or make you nerves.

Do you fear heights so much that you won't even climb ladders. Some even fear water, maybe because they fell in the water as a child.

Look we all fear rejection. That's why walking into a room full of strangers is unsettling. How can we overcome our fears no matter what they are?

Yes there is, Jesus says so in our Gospel lesson, he said. *Fear God and you will be fearless – fearless of bullies, and fearless of the future.*

Jesus spoke the words of our text to prepare his disciples for missionary work, telling the world about their sin and their savior Jesus Christ.

The disciples were prepared for this effort, because as were told Jesus had given them the power to heal the sick and drive out demons.

Yet, their task won't be easy. Jesus said: *"A student is not above his teacher, nor a servant above his master.*

Here Jesus warned his disciples that since he had been harassed, they could expect to be hassled as well and this shouldn't surprise them.

But we should not be discouraged. Jesus was often rejected and today we will also be if we're truly one of his followers.

And that's a good question for us to ponder this morning. So ask yourself, am I really a true follower of Jesus?

Look, Jesus has called upon all of us to deny our sinful flesh. But do we use our intellect to rationalize our sins and try not to avoid them?

The problem could be that we don't see Jesus as our leader, but see him as our maid, someone who is to follow behind us and clean up after the messes we make.

And when Jesus doesn't clean up after us, when he lets us suffer the consequences of our sin, we complain that he isn't there for us.

But Jesus is not our maid; he is our leader and he gives us good reasons to let him do the leading.

He went on to say to his disciples: *“Do not be afraid of those who kill the body but cannot kill the soul. Rather, be afraid of the One who can destroy both soul and body in hell”.*

There was no reason for the disciples to be bluffed into silence by the bullies they would encounter. Those bullies could kill them, but they couldn't touch their souls.

No matter how hard they hit us, they cannot break what's on the inside, our soul.

No matter how hard they hit us, they cannot break what's on the inside, that being our soul.

God, however, has the power to break our soul as well, that is, he has the power to end our joy forever by banishing us from his love.

Now when Jesus says that we should fear God he's speaking about a respectful reverence not terror. Here Jesus is saying for us to stand in awe of God, not man.

Instead stand in awe of what God has already given to you: his love and promises of daily bread and eternal life.

This is what Jesus was getting at when he said: *"There is nothing concealed that will not be disclosed or hidden that will not be made known. What I tell you in the dark, speak in the daylight; what is whispered in your ear, proclaim from the roofs"*.

Another words "eventually everything is going to be out in the open, and everyone will know how things really are.

The Message translation puts those same verses like this. "Eventually everything is going to be out in the open, and everyone will know how things really are.

Well the Son of God has whispered into our ears the secret of eternal life. When someone tells you a secret, it means that they trust you. What a privileged position we hold!

Now, Jesus has also whispered the reason the world is the way it is and how it's going to end.

He has whispered to us how to be happy and content no matter what our station in life. He has whispered all this to us through his Word.

Now shout what you know from the rooftops because these secrets aren't just for you, they're for everyone.

Will everyone be happy with what we have to say? No. They especially won't like the part about sin.

They may even persecute us for that message. More and more people today believe they don't need God.

But Jesus assures us that we do need God when he said; *“Are not two sparrows sold for a penny? Yet not one of them will fall to the ground apart from the will of your Father. And even the very hairs of your head are all numbered.*

So don't be afraid; you are worth more than many sparrows”. It's not surprising to hear that we are worth more to God than sparrows.

What is perhaps surprising to learn is that not one of the billions of sparrows that fly around this world falls to the ground apart from God's will.

The sparrow that lives among the cherry trees of Japan, and the sparrow that fly's through the forests of Germany.

As well as the sparrow that chirps outside your bedroom are all under God's watchful care.

If God gives sparrows this much attention, won't he also give you the care and attention you need?

This does not mean that you will never fall to the ground. Jesus did not say that the sparrows never fall to the ground because God watches them.

They just don't fall to the ground apart from his will. Likewise God hasn't promised to keep sickness or even death from us.

But he will use these difficulties for our good. That's because he knows exactly what we need.

Why, he even knows how many strands of hair we each have. What I like about that verse is that it doesn't say that God could count the hairs on your head.

But he's not going to bother. No. He's already done that and already knows how many hairs you have and how many more will fall out today.

Not even your mother or your spouse knows those details about you and frankly they don't care to, but God does.

Is there any need to be afraid of the future then? Not when we fear God and standing in awe of his power to protect and care for us.

Actually there is one thing we should be afraid of and that's turning away from our Savior. Jesus concluded our text with these words:

"Whoever acknowledges me before men, I will also acknowledge him before my Father in heaven. But whoever disowns me before men, I will disown him before my Father in heaven".

Just because you eagerly confess Jesus now does not mean that you will continue to do so in the future.

Remember Satan is working very hard to pull you away from your Savior. He will fight 'til your death to claim you for himself.

Look at how close he came to claiming the Apostle Peter. Hours after Peter boasted he would never deny Jesus he did just that!

And like Peter we often disown Jesus too, don't we? When speaking about what we're going to do over the weekend.

Do we tell our friends and co-workers, "I'm going to church!" or do we leave that out, embarrassed of what they might think of us?

Or when God's design for marriage is challenged in a conversation do we just remain silent?

Look this kind of silence can become deadly, for if we continue to deny Jesus before men, he will deny us forever.

That kind of silence can become deadly, for if we continue to deny Jesus before men, he will deny us forever.

My friends don't be afraid of what others will think of you because of your faith. Fear God instead.

Love and respect him and you will be fearless even when Judgment Day comes and the world as we know it is falling apart.

You won't be afraid when the sun stops shining and when the earth is ripped apart.

Nor by great earthquakes because you will know that this is the fanfare announcing Jesus' return.

And at his return he will gather the faithful, you and me, and introduce us each to his heavenly Father saying, "Father, here's my brother.

And over there is my sister. They've come to live with us forever." God the Father will answer, "Welcome! Come sit on the thrones prepared for you.

Come and rule with my Son who washed you clean from all of your sins." Look forward to that reality - the reality of an eternal life with God where nothing, not spiders.

Not thunder and lightning, not even our sin or the sin of others can ever frighten us again.

Amen

The grace of our Lord Jesus Christ and the love of God the Father, and the fellowship of the Holy spirit be with us forever. Amen.