

God's eye is always on me

Bible reference for sermon Matthew 10:24-39

29 Are not two sparrows sold for a penny? Yet not one of them will fall to the ground apart from your Father. 30 And even the hairs of your head are all counted. 31 So do not be afraid; you are of more value than many sparrows.

Today's Gospel reading may be difficult for you and me to hear. Families in turmoil. Disciples of Jesus ridiculed or even persecuted and cast out because of their faith. Who wants any of this? Who wants to take up a cross and follow where Jesus goes if its going to be that hard?

Jesus boldly proclaims that with his coming the last struggle for the salvation of humankind has broken out. Its that serious. The cross. The cross is it! The cross will be where God will bring peace to those who receive the promises of God in the One who goes to that cross for them. Jesus is on his way there now. And as we've already heard there is opposition to him on the way. And we also know that for the people that Matthew primarily wrote his gospel for there is opposition to Jesus and his claims to be God's Messiah.

Jews have become Christians in Jerusalem and dispersed even to Asia Minor, modern day Turkey. The Jewish authorities, like Saul who became Paul breathe angry fire against them. And it causes problems, divisions even in families. Who do you say Jesus is and what does his cross mean?

Even today. He will be a stumbling block for those who refuse to believe and receive. His coming will bring about actual altercations and conflicts even within the closest circles of the family.

It is quite likely that the community of Christians from a Jewish background for which Matthew wrote had experienced such family divisions and that some followers had even been turned out of their families.

And I wonder if families and communities in Australia and the modern world are still finding reasons to divide, to exclude, to hurt. And for what eternal outcome?

Our modern world and our land is not exempt, it seems to have plenty of divisions—political, economic, social,



racial, ethnic and gender included. Political views seem to be more extreme, and division easily results.

Not only in our communities but in our church and our families. Many of us can relate to situations where the family can no longer celebrate special family times because divisions that tore them apart.

Some divisions are related to faith. Some people are just angry at God and their family. Sometimes there are people of faith in the same family who hear Jesus' words differently. And this can cause great angst and lead to division. Unless you see it my way, you're out! Utter madness! In every generation it seems passionate young people of faith can challenge with parents or the senior gatekeepers of a church when their generation sees things differently from their parents: attitudes to people from other lands, duty and responsibility to others,

The fair and just treatment of all God's people, a healthy concern for the environment, or a more progressive understanding around issues of human sexuality. Young people you are the Church. We need your voices. Sherley has just become a member of our church council. What a joy that is to me. We need your voices to come to that table and tables of future making, like worship, Mercy and Justice and Mission teams to makes decisions. We need your voices at the tables which shape the future. We are the body of Christ and in our differences, as Pastor Sue preached last Sunday, the gospel poured into our hearts from God which makes us right and makes us one. God makes us one at the cross.

We have in my view, one of the best pastors in our church in Pastor Sue as our pastor. I've been reflecting on how blessed we are and I've been drinking deeply from the pool which is St Paul's village and all you mean to me. It takes a village to raise a child, they say, and you helped raise Pastor Sue who I know is needed in our wider church too. My point is that together as a church family we make a difference. And especially in this time of extremes, we are called to be active in love to drown out hate speech and stupidity which causes fear and division. As Jesus says, the world will know us by our love.

We see divisions in the world (war and political ideologies) and in our country and in our city. Divisions between different regions and different groups.

Divisions in the church which we fought so hard to heal and repair continue today and they result in divisions in families.

We look inwardly. The spiritual powers of sin, of death and of the evil one still conspire and we fall, even though they have already been defeated.

And so Jesus tells his disciples there will be times when it won't be easy. It wasn't then and it isn't today. But Christ and his promise carry us far beyond where we limit our thinking and our hope.

Our God of peace and love and life and hope speaks a word today. Be courageous. Be involved. I am with you. I have you.

Did you hear Jesus speak a word "Don't be afraid" 3 x in today's passage.

24 "A disciple is not above the teacher nor a slave above the master; 25 it is enough for the disciple to be like the teacher and the slave like the master. If they have called the master of the house Beelzebul, how much more will they malign those of his household!

26 "So have no fear of them, for nothing is covered up that will not be uncovered and nothing secret that will not become known. 27 What I say to you in the dark, tell in the light, and what you hear whispered, proclaim from the housetops. 28 Do not fear those who kill the body but cannot kill the soul; rather, fear the one who can destroy both soul and body in hell. 29 Are not two sparrows sold for a penny? Yet not one of them will fall to the ground apart from your Father. 30 And even the hairs of your head are all counted. 31 So do not be afraid; you are of more value than many sparrows.

Your Saviour and Shepherd knows you and the trials you face. He knows my family trials at the news as both Sue and I battle with cancer. He knows our fears and anger and anxiety and grief. Mine... Yours....

Your Saviour and Shepherd loves you. Jesus knows the anxiety and fears you have. He is with you and he has a plan for you as his beloved one for whom he willingly gives up his own life. For you!

That's the story. For you.

He speaks to you and me. He speaks his word of courage to encourage you and me to be people of courageous faith:

Luke 1:30

"Do not be afraid, Mary, for you have found favour with God.

Luke 2:10

"Do not be afraid, for see, I am bringing you good news of great joy for all the people:

Luke 1:30 and Luke 2:10 angel messengers to Mary and to the Shepherds announcing the Messiah;

Matthew 28:5 The angel messenger at the empty tomb announcing the resurrection of Jesus.

Matthew 28:5

"Do not be afraid, for I know that you are looking for Jesus who was crucified.

John 14:27
Peace I leave with you; my peace I give to you. I do not give to you as the world gives. Do not let your hearts be troubled, and **do not let them be afraid.**

Isaiah 41:10
The Lord promises Israel and us “I have chosen you and not cast you off. **Do not fear** for I am with you (Baptism promise); do not fear for I am your God.”

Psalm 27:1
So we can say and boldly confess “The Lord is my light and my salvation; **whom shall I fear?** The Lord is the stronghold of my life; **of whom shall I be afraid?”**

John 14:27: Jesus’ message to his disciples as he promises the Holy Spirit.

Isaiah 41:10 The Lord promises Israel and us “I have chosen you and not cast you off. Do not fear for I am with you (Baptism promise); do not fear for I am your God.”

Psalm 27:1 so we can say and boldly confess “The Lord is my light and my salvation; whom shall I fear? The Lord is the stronghold of my life; of whom shall I be afraid?”

Jesus says to us *“So do not be afraid; you are of more value than many sparrows.”*

There is a hymn I didn’t know of until recently. “His eye is on the sparrow...so it is always on me.

I’ve found an amazing peace knowing that Jesus’ eye is on me in facing challenges in life. I found peace in my life back in my time as Assistant Bishop of the LCANZ when we, as a Church submitted ourselves to the Word of God and struggled honestly together as a Church family to discern God’s Word concerning ordination. There were some people in some places who sought to sow fear as the answer. But it wasn’t the answer. And it never is. The Word of promise in Christ which points me to the cross and the One who goes there for me is always the answer.

Hold on to the promise

Hold on to the Promiser

Act boldly

13 Keep alert; stand firm in the faith; be courageous; be strong. 14 Let all that you do be done in love. (1 Cor 16:13, 14)

For his eye is always on you and your relationships, your family, your church and your God goes with you. Amen.

Video of the service including the above address can be found on the St Paul’s Lutheran Church Youtube page <https://www.youtube.com/@stpaulslutheranchurchboxhi1133>