

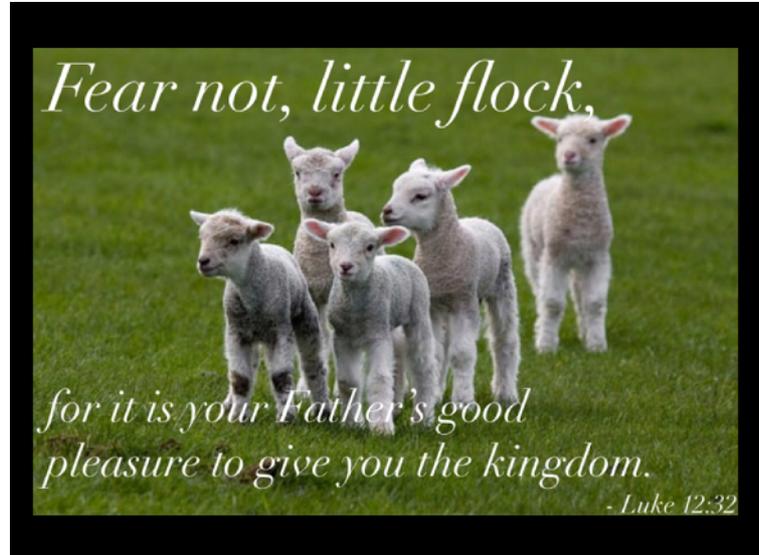
Have No Fear, Little Flock

Luke 12:22-40

“Do not be afraid.” “Fear not.” Well, maybe that’s easy for you to say. Do not be afraid. Well, you should see it and hear it from our perspective. I mean, here we are out in the open, exposed to the battering winds and harsh elements, wolves waiting to devour. Fear not?!

Maybe that was something of the initial response of those shepherds out in the field who heard these words:

“Do not be afraid; for see — I am bringing you good news of great joy for all the people: to you is born this day in the city of David a Saviour, who is the Messiah, the Lord.”



You know these words? The words of the angel, the messenger of God, announcing the coming of a Saviour for all people, the Saviour, one born as a human for all humans. Fear not little flock.

Don't be anxious. Don't be anxious, Martha, about all those worries. I'm here, Jesus says. Come to me, you who are weary and burdened. Have no fear little flock. I'm here. I'm here for you. I'm always here for you.

Don't worry Abraham... yes, you're an old man. But your descendants will be as numerous as all the stars in the sky! Nothing is impossible for me.

As Clarry is baptised today and we rejoice with him and his family, I think of the *magnitude* of God's promise, the precious gift of family, and the anxiety I felt sometimes as a young parent. When our first-born gift of a son came 33 years ago, I distinctly remember wondering what to do. Maybe Sue knows; but I'm scared, Lord. What do I do? What's going on? Or perhaps like Martha: Lord, there's just too much. I'm anxious to do the best I can. Tell Mary to help me. Worry, anxiety, busyness all seem to be part of life... even though we seem to have possessions, and access to so many helps. Have no fear. Fear not? It's easy for you to say, Jesus.

And what of our fears, our concerns, our anxiety for our church? News of Pastor Aldi concluding his call as Associate Pastor is still raw. What now? News of people's hurt, some long term and some recent, occupies us. "What have we done?" This question, from someone at one of the meetings where Bishop Lester spoke in the last two weeks, remains with me. We are anxious. We're anxious for people who hurt. We're anxious for our community. We need healing and we need a time of healing and farewelling where appropriate. We need time to grieve. I don't pretend to have all the answers for what this looks like. But I know that I need you and your Christ-presence and wisdom. I'll need wise, pastoral, gifted people to help us, both from within Jesus' little flock here, and further beyond. I don't know know all the answers — but God does, and God is.

When on Thursday morning I heard on the radio Donald Trump say that his rhetoric brings people together — well, I am sorry, but I don't believe it. Not every authority figure is believable. But we believe Jesus?

“Have no fear, little flock.” Jesus, do you mean this? Can it be?

And God comes to us. To such a world as this. To such a community as this. To such a child of God like me, like Clarry, like you — to each of us, Jesus comes.

Jesus comes to his people to bring his peace, his life, his presence. “I am with you always, even to the end of the age.” That's Jesus' promise to Clarry today, and his promise everyday to Clarry and to you and to me. I am among you as one who serves. That's Jesus promise in Luke 22, as Jesus gives us the gift of his Supper.

Do not be afraid, little flock, for your Father has been pleased to give you the kingdom.

The angel announced the coming, the presence of a Saviour, Jesus. And where Jesus is, there is the kingdom, the promised kingdom of God. I know you have fears. I know there are anxious times my precious little one, my precious little flock. But don't be overwhelmed by the world and the fears and anxiety caused because of sin, for the kingdom is here. I am here... for you... with you.

The shepherds who were given the news of Jesus, found that they became the ones to go and tell others.

When they saw this (Jesus in the manger), they made known what had been told them about this child; and all who heard it were amazed at what the shepherds told them. But Mary treasured all these words and pondered them in her heart. The shepherds returned, glorifying and praising God for all they had heard and seen, as it had been told them.

Fear became joy... joy in God's saving presence. You and I have the same gift to bring... to a little flock called St Paul's Box Hill, and beyond to people who hurt, who fear, who are anxious... to all the world.

As Jesus speaks to his disciples in Luke chapter 12, they are journeying with him on the road to Jerusalem. He's preparing them for the time of his departure from them, so they can be ready to be his proclaimers. We join them today.

Be dressed, and be ready, little flock. Be ready for Jesus now. How? By daily receiving the news again that “I am with you”. Be ready... be dressed by daily growing in trust and knowledge and hope and life as my disciple. I come to you now, little flock, to heal you by my word of forgiveness, and to build you up again. Be ready by growing as little shepherds, hearing the promises and sharing them, good news of great joy for all people. For that is who you are. That is who we are!

Jesus knows our fears, our anxiety. He is here. Give your fears and your worries to him, and grow in being who you are, little flock; be ready to speak the word of Christ, the word of grace.

We are not a community driven by fear. We are not a community driven by a word of law which condemns. Christ himself has taken this condemnation on his shoulders on the cross, and he is risen. The evil one would have us stuck in fear and worry. But Christ has won the victory. Our Lord loves us. He knows you and me intimately, and he comes in the midst of us to bring life, and to send us with his life.

Jesus is here.

Have no fear little flock. For your Father has been pleased to give you the kingdom. Amen.