

MINISTRY BY MAIL
Lutheran Conference of Confessional Fellowship
www.lutheranlccf.org
Thirteenth Sunday After Trinity, September 3, 2023

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(Hymns found in The Lutheran Hymnal, CPH, 1941)
Hymns: 8, 260:6, 61, 263, 477:2.
Lessons: Psalm 23, 2 Corinthians 1:3-7, Luke 12:32-40.
Sermon Text: Luke 12:32.
Sermon by Pastor Robert Mehltrittter

In the name of Jesus Christ, Dear Fellow Redeemed,

There are lots of things we could be afraid of. Do I have to name them? Some of them might include: The future of our church. Our health. The future of our nation. Violence even in our peaceful communities. Even death, which many people are afraid of. And the list could go on and on.

But God is telling you today.

**"DO NOT BE AFRAID, LITTLE FLOCK,
FOR YOUR FATHER HAS BEEN PLEASED TO GIVE YOU THE KINGDOM."**

1. **Yes, we are a little group.**
2. **But we are Jesus' flock.**
3. **Your Father in heaven wants to give you a whole kingdom, the kingdom.**

There is truly a little flock gathered here today.

As you are gathered here today, you may wonder as did Jesus after he healed ten men from the dreaded disease of leprosy: "*Were not all ten cleansed? Where are the other nine?*" Luke 17:17 (NIV) Jesus might have asked the question in this way: 'Didn't I come to earth to heal all men from all wickedness and sin?' Is everyone as sick of sin as you are? Is everyone as troubled by their sinfulness as you are? Does everyone feel the full weight of the law of God?

You've learned the commandments and made application to your lives.

How many times haven't you heard that the two chief teachings of the Bible are Law and Gospel? The Law shows us our sinfulness and the Gospel shows us our Savior. Of course, where there is no sinfulness there is no need of the Gospel of Jesus Christ. Jesus himself said "*It is not the healthy who need a doctor, but the sick.*" Matthew 9:12 (NIV)

But who is sinless?

Yes, there is truly a little flock gathered here this morning. Even many who claim to make the same confession you do are not with you today. Why? We don't know what is in the hearts of those who are not worshipping our creator, redeemer God here with us today. We can only look at outward appearance and see empty seats here at church. We do not know what is in the hearts of those who are not here, but it may be that God's law hasn't crushed their hearts as strongly as it has yours.

Of course, God is the one who judges. The Lord judges the heart, even if we only see outward actions and deeds. He knows what is going on. There can certainly be valid, legitimate reasons why people can't come to this building on Sunday mornings.

Yet it is discouraging to us that we are such a little flock gathered here. Remember that because "*we have a great priest over the house of God, let us draw near to God with a sincere heart in full assurance of faith, having our hearts sprinkled to cleanse us from a guilty conscience and having our bodies washed with pure water. Let us hold unswervingly to the hope we profess, for he who promised is faithful. And let us consider how we may spur one another on toward love and good deeds. Let us not give up meeting together, as some*

are in the habit of doing, but let us encourage one another--and all the more as you see the Day approaching.”
Hebrews 10:21-25 (NIV)

What is your responsibility toward those not here, to those who have made a public confession that they believe, teach and confess as you do? Invite, admonish, encourage, not just once, but repeatedly.

You feel your sinfulness and you came so that you could hear in a very personal setting about the healing you receive from the true Gospel of Jesus Christ.

But I think you know that, even if this building were full to overflowing, we would still be a little flock. We – and our confession in Jesus Christ – are truly a minority in our communities and our world.

We are “little” in the eyes of the world. We are a tiny group compared to other churches.

But a pastor once said ‘God and one make a majority’, with the Word of God in your life, supporting you, with you proclaiming and living the Word of God.

Remember, Jesus Christ has redeemed us, he has redeemed you, he bought us back from Satan, the devil, who deceived Eve and Adam and continues to deceive us today.

We are a little “flock”. That word “flock” reminds us that we have a shepherd to guide us, to guard us, to feed us, to lead us to eternal pastures of abundant life and safety. Jesus’ first hearers knew first-hand the meaning of a flock and the shepherd who guided, guarded, fed, and kept it safe.

Jesus is, after all, “the good shepherd”.

And although you are part of a little flock, God tells you: don’t be afraid -- of anything!

That’s the comfort you can hear today.

The true Gospel of Jesus Christ assures you that Jesus paid for your sins. He atoned for all of them so that you don’t have to suffer for them forever in hell.

And where do you find real comfort? It is going to be from the Words of God, not from attending a megachurch that may teach some kind of prosperity gospel or tell you what a good person you are.

True comfort must come from what the true God tells you in his Word.

If we think about comfort, I might ask you how often have you tried to comfort a child who is afraid of something. That child’s fear may be totally unreasonable – to us – but it is a real fear for the child. And what’s the best way to comfort a troubled child?

There is no better way than with God’s Word. And the more of God’s Word you know, the easier it is to find words that will really comfort that child as you hold him or her in your arms.

And the more of Scripture you know – from sermons, from personal reading, from participating in Bible classes, the more tools and weapons and words of comfort you can apply to your heart – and you can comfort others with.

Perhaps the greatest comfort you can find is that fact that your God, Jesus Christ is your shepherd.

Your God can conquer anything. Do you remember how Jesus calmed the storm on the Sea of Galilee – and it was instantly calm? That doesn’t happen naturally. It takes a while for waves to calm down after a storm. But Jesus calmed the storm instantly.

Do you remember how Jesus comforted his disciples on the evening of the day he rose from the dead? He proclaimed to them the peace which God gives. He said **“Peace be with you!”** John 20:19 (NIV)

And Jesus will handle everything in our lives if we will only turn to him.

Ah, how often haven’t we tried to take things into our own hands when we may have thought God wasn’t doing anything about it!

How often haven’t we fallen into sins again and again when we didn’t let God do it and relied on ourselves, our own wisdom, wills, desires to try to solve things that we should have let God solve!

We come back to the words of Jesus: **“Do not be afraid, little flock, for your Father has been pleased to give you the kingdom.”** Fear Not!

At the times when we are troubled, at the times when we seek comfort, we turn to the Lord, the shepherd of his flock who says ‘fear not, I am the Lord who leads you’.

It is the voice of your good shepherd who says. **“Don’t be afraid, little flock, because your Father delights to give you the kingdom.”** Luke 12:32 (CSB)

A favorite psalm assures us ***“The LORD is my shepherd ... He restoreth my soul: he leadeth me in the paths of righteousness for his name's sake. Yea, though I walk through the valley of the shadow of death, I will fear no evil: for thou art with me; thy rod and thy staff they comfort me. ... Surely goodness and mercy shall follow me all the days of my life: and I will dwell in the house of the LORD for ever.”*** Psalm 23:1-6 (KJV)

Two weeks ago you read a sermon that included the idea of being content with what God has provided for you. (Eleventh Sunday After Trinity)

And now, in the very next verse after that sermon text Jesus is telling you that your heavenly father will give you a kingdom, the kingdom. That’s not an earthly kingdom with all the power and wealth that comes with being the head of that earthly kingdom.

It is the kingdom of God. It is Christ ruling in your hearts right now, here on earth, and hereafter in heaven. Can you imagine how perfect a kingdom that will be? Your heavenly Father takes pleasure and is willing to give you the kingdom!

And because he will give you the kingdom, don’t be concerned about matters of this life. Don’t let them be your all-consuming passion.

When God makes us content with the earthly possessions we have, we can do what Jesus tells us in the very next verses, and share our earthly possessions. ***“Sell your possessions and give to the poor. Provide purses for yourselves that will not wear out, a treasure in heaven that will not be exhausted, where no thief comes near and no moth destroys. For where your treasure is, there your heart will be also.***

And so we can be ready for the Lord’s coming, which may be any minute now.

“Be dressed ready for service and keep your lamps burning, like men waiting for their master to return from a wedding banquet, so that when he comes and knocks they can immediately open the door for him. It will be good for those servants whose master finds them watching when he comes. I tell you the truth, [the master] will dress himself to serve, will have them recline at the table and will come and wait on them. It will be good for those servants whose master finds them ready, even if he comes in the second or third watch of the night.”

Lord, even though we are little flock, we take comfort in the kingdom you have prepared for us. Lord, make us ever watchful for your coming! Amen.