

Fear Not

There are several themes in the Christmas story:

Angels.
Unto you a child is given.
The son of David.
He shall be called Jesus -- the Lord Saves.
He will save his people for their sins.
Mary treasured all of these things in her heart.

And, upon every visit from the angels: "Fear not."

Fear not, Mary. For you are highly favored. Fear not shepherds, for unto you is given a savior. Fear not, Joseph, to take Mary home as your wife.

Fear.

It is one of the most powerful human emotions.

Pumping out adrenalin in time of danger. Giving extra strength to flee.

But, frequently, fear paralyzes. Soldiers, frozen in the trenches of life's battles. Unable to move. Unable to serve. Unable to fight.

Fear is a normal emotion when confronting the divine. The shepherds were terrified. Zacharias was "gripped with fear."

But part of the message of the angels was "fear not." Zacharias would prophesy, when he finally found his voice, that God's Messiah would "enable us to serve him without fear."¹

Fear Not. Jesus continued this theme as he prepared to die and leave his disciples. "Do not let your hearts be troubled. Trust in God. Trust also in me."²

I am not leaving you as orphans. I am sending the Counselor, the Holy Spirit, to comfort you. "Do not let your hearts be troubled and do not be afraid."³

Are you are afraid of the world? Well, "In the world you will have trouble. But take heart! I have overcome the world."⁴

¹ Luke 1:74.

² John 14:1.

³ John 14:27.

⁴ John 16:33.

Do not be afraid, Peter. You will fail. But I have prayed for you. And when you have turned back, strengthen your brothers."⁵

There are common fears that all Christians face. Death. Ridicule. Failure. Jesus faced them all.

There are common sins that all Christians face. Greed. Pride. Selfishness. Jesus faced them all. He knows about temptation because he faced every temptation and still lived without sin.

And God has made him our high priest. Sympathetic to our failures. Understanding of our needs. He loves us. In spite of who we are or what we've done.

The devil uses our sin to create discouragement, hopelessness, and fear. Paralyzing fear. Fear that encourages us to drop out of the battle. For if God's army is immobilized, Satan has won the battle, if not the war.

In this time of communion, we are to examine ourselves. We are to present ourselves again as living sacrifices -- presents to God. Faithful to the call. Willing to get up from our failures and march out as warriors for our Lord.

Maybe fear and failure or sin have crippled you. They sure have me. The world is out to get you. Take heart! Jesus has overcome the world. Have you fallen? Take heart! Jesus uses fallen Christians. Just ask Peter.

Take heart! The battle is won. Death is overcome. Sin is thrown to the bottom of the sea. Because Jesus rescued you. Because Jesus rescued me.

There are presents under the tree.

Jesus wants one more. He calls you to place your life in the alter of his hands. To become a living present. A living sacrifice. Not a dead Christian. Not a dormant Christian. A living sacrifice. A vibrant child of faith. To do his will. To follow his voice. To answer his call.

In a world as tumultuous as the storm-tossed sea: fear not.

⁵ Luke 22:32.