

Text: John 14:25-27

²⁵ “All this I have spoken while still with you. ²⁶ But the Counselor, the Holy Spirit, whom the Father will send in my name, will teach you all things and will remind you of everything I have said to you. ²⁷ Peace I leave with you; my peace I give you. I do not give to you as the world gives. Do not let your hearts be troubled and do not be afraid.

Prayer of the Day:

Praise to You, O Lord, for the Great Commission to “make disciples of all nations” (Matthew 28:19). The Gospel message that we are privileged to share proclaims salvation to all people through Your Son, Jesus Christ. We thank You for making us a part of Your plan to reach out to all. As the Holy Spirit works through Your Word, may others know the joy of sins forgiven through the suffering and death of Jesus Christ our Lord, who lives and reigns with the Father and the Holy Spirit, one God, now and forever. Amen!

Verse of the Day:

God wants all people to be saved and come to a knowledge of the truth. (1 Timothy 2:4)

Sermon Text:

This week I had the opportunity to travel to Appleton for a New Teacher Induction Seminar. There the presenter talked about a book called “The Twin Thieves” which thrive on our fear and destroy the work that we can be doing together. Do you know what they are? The two things that at least this author says are absolute killers for us and stunt us as we seek to move forward? The Fear of Failure and the Fear of Judgment. As I sat there with evangelism on the brain because of the sermon which was ruminating in my mind, I couldn’t help but think those both come together in an awful and nasty soup when it comes to evangelism, the call God has given yes, to pastors and the church but to each individual Christian as well to go out and tell others about His saving love in Christ.

The verse of the day said, *God wants all people to be saved and come to a knowledge of the truth.* (1 Timothy 2:4). And in Matthew 28 Jesus adds, “go ... go and make disciples of all nations, baptizing them in the name of the Father and of the Son and of the Holy Spirit, and teaching them to obey everything I have commanded you. (Matthew 28:19-20)” So it would appear that God says, “I want everyone saved and you should go out and tell them that.” We call this the marching orders of the Church or as others might say, this is your vision statement as the Church of God.

Of course, that all seems good and fine until that last part comes out. You see, that’s when our fear gets in the way. Do you recall that section of God’s Word where the Lord Called Moses (Exodus chapter 4)? Moses was asked to go to the people of Israel and lead them out of Egypt and his response was, “What if they don’t believe me or listen?” “What if I fail Lord?” God gave him miraculous signs to perform and then Moses said, “I am not eloquent.” What if they judge me, Lord? God gave him Aaron who could talk the bark off a tree and Moses said, “Please send someone else.” Yep, if God had not be as persistent as He is Moses, that great Old Testament leader would have never set foot back in Egypt. He was too afraid to go.

The disciples were there too frozen by fear, even Peter was trying to put on a good face. In fact, John 13 and the first half of 14 read like a bad test full of awful answers as Peter refuses to have Jesus wash his feet, Jesus announces Judas' betrayal and Peter rejects the idea that he would ever deny Jesus only to have Thomas and Philip completely miss the point of what Jesus was saying to them. And of course in the garden, it happens as it all begins to look like failure they flee fearful that the guards will seize them next and everything hopelessly spirals out of control, or at least so it seems.

Been there? I have! Satan loves to throw those fears in our face whenever God loving provides the opportunity to be part of His plan of salvation for some precious soul. What if I don't say the right thing? What if instead I say the wrong thing and fail? The stakes are too high Lord find someone else. What if I say the right things at they reject me, hate me for it? Oh no, Lord you really gotta find someone else other than me, I can't do it. I'll make a mess please, please, just find someone else. I know that the Second lesson said they need someone but send the pastors! Send the teachers! Anyone but me!

Did you catch Jesus' words in the Gospel Lesson? *The Counselor, the Holy Spirit, whom the Father will send in my name, will teach you all things and will remind you of everything I have said to you.* He combats the fear by promising a helper. You do not go alone, are never alone as you live for Christ. The Holy Spirit will go with you and there is none more eloquent, intelligent, effective than He is. He will lend His powerful aid. He will teach you all you need to know. He will remind you of everything I have taught, all you need, to hold His Gospel out in the world around me.

So, *Peace I leave with you; my peace I give you. I do not give to you as the world gives. Do not let your hearts be troubled and do not be afraid.* Or perhaps in paraphrase, calm down, it'll be okay. This isn't about You but about the Spirit working through the Word you hold out. That's rock solid and won't disappear so don't worry about what you are or are not. Live in the power of forgiveness, life and salvation the Holy Spirit has given you through the means of grace, the Gospel you hold out is for you as well.

Oh, I know not everyone has the courage to exit the comfort zone and go knock on a door, for a cold call. Not everyone wants to step into a classroom full of kids and teach it. Not everyone wants to step into a pulpit to preach. But here is the beauty of that as well. God provides the gifts in us and in others too. The Old testament lesson reminds us just how much variety goes into this work God calls us to. *These commandments that I give you today are to be upon your hearts.* ⁷ *Impress them on your children. Talk about them when you sit at home and when you walk along the road, when you lie down and when you get up.* ⁸ *Tie them as symbols on your hands and bind them on your foreheads.* ⁹ *Write them on the doorframes of your houses and on your gates.* God will bring the opportunities as we live out our lives with His Word emblazoned upon us in our Baptisms as we go about our daily activities. Maybe it's the loving mother and father who sit down for the devotions with their children. Maybe its in the simple conversation you have with a friend whose curious about something and knows you go to church. Maybe it is in the cold call knock on the door of the new neighbor asking if they need a church and you bid them come and see. Or maybe it's in the call to ministry, did you know that we have four kids honestly considering MLC and the college of ministry within our congregation even as we speak, maybe even more just quietly contemplating how they can reach out and make a difference whether in classrooms or pulpits, factory floors or milking parlors, offices or families of their own someday.

The Twin Thieves thrive on fear but do you know what beats them every time? John will later write in His first letter, *There is no fear in love. But perfect love drives out fear, because fear has to do with punishment. The one who fears is not made perfect in love. We love because he first loved us.* (1 John 4: 18-19). Martin Luther wrote, *I believe that I cannot by my own thinking or choosing believe in Jesus Christ, my Lord, or come to him. But the Holy Spirit has called me by the gospel, enlightened me with his gifts, sanctified and kept me in the true faith. In the same way he calls, gathers, enlightens, and sanctifies the whole Christian Church on earth, and keeps it with Jesus Christ in the one true faith.* Brothers and sisters, that God did so wonderfully for you, He would do for others. He would use you to do it. But there is no reason to fear for the Father who made you, the Son who went to the cross to save you, they have sent the Holy Spirit who goes with you! Amen.