

## Sermon

Pastor Kristy Daniels

*Note: This is the sermon from last week, August 7, 2022. The Gospel lesson was Luke 12:32-40 and the hymn Pastor Kristy references is "Have No Fear, Little Flock" (ELW 764).*

Here we are, this Ninth Sunday in a very long season of Sundays after Pentecost, where we use the color green to remind us it is a season of growth, and a season of life.

So, you'll remember at Pentecost, we used the color red, a sign of the Holy Spirit. The disciples received the Holy Spirit and were sent out into the world to continue the work that Jesus had begun. We switch to green *during* the season because it is a season of growth, where we are learning what it means to be disciples, to pick up our crosses, and follow Jesus.

And so I think we have some of the most beautiful readings of the church calendar year during this season – thank goodness, since it's such a long one! But today's reading made me think of Advent because it sounds like the end times. But what are we *learning* in this text for today, about being disciples, being prepared, being ready?

But what I heard, when it's coupled with the other texts, is our focus on our faith – to have faith no matter what. And we all know that sometimes our faith is strong, and sometimes it is weak. That's why I believe we're called together as a community, as the body of Christ, so there will always be people around us who can support and encourage, give wisdom and guidance when our own faith is weak, and that we can provide the same for others when they might be struggling a little bit.

But I have to say the beginning of the text is my favorite. And that might be because we grew up singing that first part at church – "Have No Fear, Little Flock" – and it's actually quite challenging to read it "Do not be afraid," because that's not how we sing it, right?

But I love that we start the text, "Be not afraid." I believe that is one of the keys to the life of discipleship. It doesn't mean that horrible, terrible things aren't going to come our way, that we're not going to face challenges as disciples. Absolutely not! And if you've read the scriptures, you will know that that is true. (Think "Daniel" for example!) Things *will* come our way that will be very challenging, and part of having faith is recognizing that we can face those challenges, and *how* we face them is how people will know whose we are in the world.

I've had a lot of experiences the last couple weeks that fit really well with this text. I've had things stolen, I've had some really challenging experiences, but it's

so grounding to be the pastor of Church of Steadfast Love, because I look around me and I think, “Okay, you’re just not going through that much. I’m sorry. Mm-mm. Nope.”

I showed up at work on Friday at 7:30, because I was on my bike, and it was gonna be hot, and there was a man standing right in front of the doors, where I just want to go in and put my bike in my office, and he was screaming. “Ahh!” So, I stopped to listen to what he had to say, because I couldn’t get past him anyway, and he was saying, “Where is God?!?” and then he said – he kind of shuffled around, because he saw me standing there – “Where is God? I am so sick and tired of living like this! I am so tired of having my things stolen and nowhere to sleep! Where is God?”

And I said, “No one deserves to live like this, fearful and afraid, not knowing where you will sleep. No one deserves to live like this, and that is not God’s will.”

And then one of my colleagues came up and opened the door for me. And he said to the man, “God is everywhere. God is here with you.”

Now, sometimes that does not work! I have seen that escalate things really fast. (I was still wearing my helmet, though, so I was feeling pretty good.) And the guy said, “Okay.”

I fully expected that at nine o’clock, he would be standing outside my door to ask me, “Where is God?” But he didn’t.

I think in the moment, it was just enough for him to be seen, and to be heard.

Where is God? God is here in our midst. God is here with us. God is inside us. God is calling us outside of ourselves for the sake of the world. Our readings today go over again and again, “God’s promise to us.”

And in Bible study this week, one of the members happened to be my mom... She said, “What I kept hearing was, ‘Promise, promise, promise’ and I wanted to know *what the promises were!*”

All right.

There’s some in this text, and they’re scattered throughout the Scripture. We hear them in our service today. And they are: that God loves us.

How do we know that?

In the beginning of the service, I was just delighted to have that opening music. (Thank you, Kyle.) It’s music I grew up with, it’s music “in here” and I heard those words of forgiveness and love – those are promises that God makes to us: that we are forgiven, that we are loved, no matter what.

Even though we need that forgiveness again, and again, and again, God knows that about us and extends to us that gift of life, those words of forgiveness, those words of knowing, "You are mine."

God promises a nation. He promises a future. He promises space; there is room for you. "I have gone ahead to prepare a place for you and it is there, reserved!"

God has promised that we don't need to worry about what today holds, because the world does not define us. We belong to God, and He has defined you as good, as God's child, and he has gifted you with many gifts, and with the blessing of community.

That's one of the most important things that the Church of Steadfast Love provides for people, is a community, a place to belong. That's why people will be there tonight, even though it will probably be 120 degrees with the sun blazing in through our windows, and they won't care. It's a place to be, where they belong. God has provided us so much, and it is so easy to forget.

One of the many promises is the promise of relationship. God calling us into right relationship with God.

And out of that promise, we are strengthened to do what God asks us to do: to love our neighbors as ourselves. It is that love that propels us out into the world, to be the broken forgiven, known, and loved people that God has created us to be, for the sake of all creation.

So, be not afraid. You are part of the flock.

There is a kingdom there that has been prepared for you.

And you are of great value.

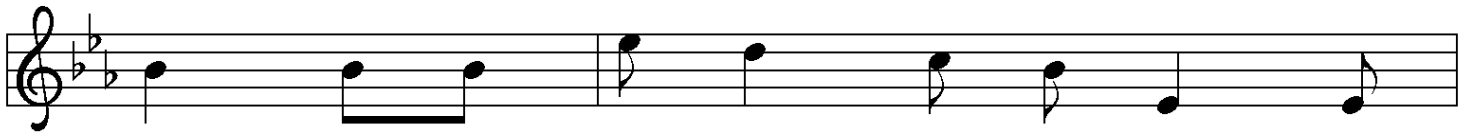
Thanks be to God.

Amen.

# Have No Fear, Little Flock



1 Have no fear, lit - tle flock; have no fear, lit - tle  
2 Have good cheer, lit - tle flock; have good cheer, lit - tle  
3 Praise the Lord high a - bove; praise the Lord high a -  
4 Thank - ful hearts raise to God; thank - ful hearts raise to



flock, for the Fa - ther has cho - sen to  
flock, for the Fa - ther will keep you in  
bove, for he stoops down to heal you, up -  
God, for he stays close be - side you, in



give you the king - dom; have no fear, lit - tle flock!  
his love for - ev - er; have good cheer, lit - tle flock!  
lift and re - store you; praise the Lord high a - bove!  
all things works with you; thank - ful hearts raise to God!