

Godly Fear– Sunday February 24th 2013.

***21 'Now hear this, O foolish and senseless people,
Who have eyes but do not see;
Who have ears but do not hear.***

***22 'Do you not fear Me?' declares the Lord.
'Do you not tremble in My presence?
For I have placed the sand as a boundary for the sea,
An eternal decree, so it cannot cross over it.
Though the waves toss, yet they cannot prevail;
Though they roar, yet they cannot cross over it.***

***23 'But this people has a stubborn and rebellious heart;
They have turned aside and departed.***

***24 'They do not say in their heart,
"Let us now fear the Lord our God,
Who gives rain in its season,
Both the autumn rain and the spring rain,
Who keeps for us
The appointed weeks of the harvest."***

(Jeremiah 5:21-24)

Beloved in the Lord,

If I were to ask you what is most lacking in modern man, what would your reply be? Some would say time. Even with all our technology we never seem to have enough time. Some would say money, some would say peace and love and joy and so on. Our text today points to a great deficiency in man and that is Godly fear. What is missing in our society and sadly even in our Churches is a healthy fear of God. By Godly fear I mean reverence, respect, a trembling at His Holy Word.

Listen again to the opening verses of our text: ***"Now hear this, O foolish and senseless people, Who have eyes but do not see; Who have ears but do not hear. 'Do you not fear Me?' declares the Lord. 'Do you not tremble in My presence?'"***

Lack of fear before God is killing our society, our Churches. So many people take sin lightly, they joke about it, they joke about God's Word and snicker and sneer at it. It was sad to see this attitude at our Synod last week, where leaders of the Church openly questioned God's Word, made light of the Day of Judgement, twisted the Truth.

This is happening because there is a lack of understanding about God and who He is. We hear a lot spoken about God's love and He truly is love, but in order to understand what God's love is, we must understand God's Holiness.

God is Holy. He is totally Holy. There is nothing unholy about Him. There is nothing sinful, nothing imperfect, nothing wilful, nothing shameful. God is perfect and Holy. He cannot lie, He is immutable and He is Holy. Because God is Holy, nothing unholy can abide in His presence. If you take an open container of petrol and expose it to a naked flame, there can be only one outcome. The fire devours the petrol.

It is sin that makes us like the petrol. We are born unholy, born in sin, and so we cannot enter the presence of a Holy God. His holiness would wipe us out like a flame does to petrol. This is where God's love enters the picture. Knowing all this and yet loving us, He had a solution. He wants us in His presence, because He loves us. The solution is His Son Jesus.

God's law states that without the shedding of blood there can be no propitiation for sin. Blood is necessary to pay the penalty of sin for the wages of sin is death. Because as we already stated God is Holy, any blood that is offered for sin has to be holy. The only way to appease His law, save us, forgive our sin was to come in the flesh, shed His own blood. That is what Jesus did. He came into the world as God's only begotten Son, born of a virgin, therefore sinless, as sin is transmitted through the seed of man. He died on a cross and with His own blood paid our sin debt in full.

““For God so loved the world, that He gave His only begotten Son, that whoever believes in Him shall not perish, but have eternal life. ¹⁷ For God did not send the Son into the world to judge the world, but that the world might be saved through Him. ¹⁸ He who believes in Him is not judged; he who does not believe has been judged already, because he has not believed in the name of the only begotten Son of God.” John 3:16-18

You see how great God's love is. He sacrificed His own Son for us so that His blood could atone for our sin. That is love. If we believe on Jesus, His blood pays for our sin and we are saved for eternity. We have eternal life in Heaven.

When we believe in Jesus then His blood cleanses us from all sin., and we are justified, made righteous before God. Justified – just as if I had never sinned. That is our position in Christ Jesus. We have a legal right as children of God. When we are washed in the blood of Jesus, God does not see us as sinful but as righteous.. When God sees Jesus blood on us, He says that our sins are gone, our debt is paid in full.

That my beloved friends is love. That is amazing grace. Never, never take this lightly.

It was a tremendous price to pay, but loving us, Jesus paid it willingly.

Once we are saved, then we are called to be holy as God is Holy. We are called to live a life that fears God. When we fear God, then we are in a good place in our life. When we humble ourselves in faith and obey Him and His Word, then we are in a good place. We are in a position where God can richly bless us.

We read in His Word: "The fear of the Lord is the beginning of wisdom;
A good understanding have all those who do *His commandments*;
His praise endures forever." Psalm 111:10

***The fear of the Lord is the beginning of knowledge;
Fools despise wisdom and instruction. Proverbs 1:7***

***he fear of the Lord is the beginning of wisdom,
And the knowledge of the Holy One is understanding. Proverbs 9:10***

You see the foundation of wisdom and true knowledge is the fear of the Lord. If and when we fear the Lord, worship and reverence Him, then He reveals His word to us.

This is why we are in such a mess, and that is why so many Churches have made a wholesale departure from the Truth of God's Word. So many Churches are nothing more than a social club with religious overtones.

Because God is merciful, patient and kind, He is giving us a chance to repent and come back to Him.

Our text today comes from Jeremiah. God used Jeremiah to proclaim His Word, to try to wake up His people. To a great degree his words fell on deaf ears and hardened hearts. Yet he continued to preach the message. He did so because God called him to do it.

I think it is worthwhile reading about Jeremiah's call. We read in Jeremiah 1:4-10

⁴ Now the word of the Lord came to me saying,

***⁵ "Before I formed you in the womb I knew you,
And before you were born I consecrated you;
I have appointed you a prophet to the nations."***

***⁶ Then I said, "Alas, Lord God!
Behold, I do not know how to speak,
Because I am a youth."***

***⁷ But the Lord said to me,
"Do not say, 'I am a youth,'
Because everywhere I send you, you shall go,
And all that I command you, you shall speak.***

***⁸ "Do not be afraid of them,
For I am with you to deliver you," declares the Lord.***

⁹ Then the Lord stretched out His hand and touched my mouth, and the Lord said to me,

"Behold, I have put My words in your mouth.

***¹⁰ "See, I have appointed you this day over the nations and over the kingdoms,
To pluck up and to break down,***

***To destroy and to overthrow,
To build and to plant.”***

I read this to you because I believe that in these words there is a call to us. Herein is our call and marching orders from God. I see in these words my own call to preach and teach the truth, but I also see here your commission as well. This is a corporate call. Today is our AGM, and I believe that God is calling our congregation to stand up and be counted. He is calling us to stand on His Word Alone – Sola Scriptura. God is calling us to set an example to others. He is calling us to be bold and not be afraid to speak the truth in love. To be salt and light for Him. To witness in Word and deed, to serve in Holy fear.

As it was in the time of Jeremiah, so it is with us and our community:

***“But this people has a stubborn and rebellious heart;
They have turned aside and departed.
²⁴ ‘They do not say in their heart,
“Let us now fear the Lord our God,
Who gives rain in its season,
Both the autumn rain and the spring rain,
Who keeps for us
The appointed weeks of the harvest.”***

Our call is to set an example to the rest of the Church and the world that Jesus is The Way, The Truth and The Life and He is the Only Way, The Only Truth and Only Life.

May we humble ourselves in the presence of the Lord today and pray that He fill us with His Holy Spirit. That we may have faith, courage, strength and everything we need to glorify His name.

May we live and serve in Godly Fear.
Amen.

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All Bible quotations taken from New American Standard Bible.