

Please read Luke 2:1-20

Suddenly, an angel of the Lord appeared among them, and the radiance of the Lord's glory surrounded them. They were terrified, but the angel reassured them. "Don't be afraid!" he said. "I bring you good news that will bring great joy to all people. The Savior—yes, the Messiah, the Lord—has been born today in Bethlehem, the city of David!

As we celebrate the coming of Jesus, we read these familiar words and we grab hold of the words: Do not be afraid.

We are living in a time where there is a lot of fear. Fear for our health, fear for our families, fear for our jobs, and fear about the future, to name just a few. To us the angel says, do not be afraid. But how do we do this?

Ironically, the scriptures also tell us in Proverbs 9:10:

Fear of the LORD is the foundation of wisdom. Knowledge of the Holy One results in good judgment.

How do we fear God, and yet not be afraid?

It seems to me that we live in a world which has downgraded the fear of God. We speak of it as a kind of respect, or we talk about a God who is all about our happiness or success.

We have lost sight of the fear of God which dispels bad fear; the fear we have of circumstances and people. When we correctly fear God; God who is a consuming fire, what is extinguished is our fear of things in this world. As Jesus said in Luke 12:4 ***"Dear friends, don't be afraid of those who want to kill your body; they cannot do any more to you after that. But I'll tell you whom to fear. Fear God, who has the power to kill you and then throw you into hell. Yes, he's the one to fear.***

We are called to find our comfort in trusting God, who holds both life and death in His hands. Martin Luther who lived during the plague wrote these timely words:

I shall ask God mercifully to protect us. Then I shall fumigate, help purify the air, administer medicine and take it. I shall avoid places and persons where my presence is not needed in order not to become contaminated and thus perchance inflict and pollute others and so cause their death as a result of my negligence. If God should wish to take me, he will surely find me and I have done what he has expected of me and so I am not responsible for either my own death or the death of others. If my neighbor needs me, however, I shall not avoid place or person but will go freely as stated above. See this is such a God-fearing faith because it is neither brash nor foolhardy and does not tempt God. (Luther's Works 43:132)

You are I are invited not be afraid. It is one of the greatest gifts which we receive when we place our faith and trust in Jesus who came to earth to save us. And we discover it in full, when we fear the Lord, who would spare nothing to ensure our rescue. Merry Christmas everyone.