

Don't Be Afraid!

Thomas Robinson, *Learning at Jesus' Side*, 10, August 5, 2012

Matthew 10:24-33 Jesus continues instructing the Twelve

²⁴ *"A **disciple** is not above his **teacher**, nor a **servant** above his **master**. ²⁵ It is enough for the disciple to be like his teacher, and the servant like his master. If they have called the master of the house **Beelzebul**, how much more will they **malign those of his household**.*

²⁶ *So **have no fear** of them, for nothing is **covered** that will not be **revealed**, or **hidden** that will not be **known**. ²⁷ What **I tell you in the dark**, say **in the light**, and what you hear whispered, **proclaim on the housetops**.*

²⁸ *And **do not fear** those who **kill the body** but cannot kill the soul. Rather **fear him who can destroy both soul and body in Gehenna**.*

²⁹ *Are not **two sparrows** sold for an assarion (about \$4)? And not one of them will fall to the ground apart from your **Father**. ³⁰ But even the **hairs of your head are all numbered**. ³¹ **Fear not**, therefore; **you are of more value** than many sparrows.*

³² *So everyone who **acknowledges me before people**, I also will acknowledge before my **Father who is in heaven**, ³³ but whoever **denies me before people**, I also will deny before my **Father who is in heaven**."*

Matthew 6:25, 33

²⁵ *"Therefore I tell you, **do not be anxious about your life**, what you will **eat** or what you will **drink**, nor about your body, what you will put on. ... ³³ But **seek first the kingdom of God** and his righteousness, and all these things will be added to you."*

Matthew 8:24-26 Jesus crosses the Sea of Galilee in a boat with his disciples.

²⁴ And behold, there arose a great storm (quake) on the sea, so that the boat was being swamped by the waves; but he was asleep. ²⁵ And they went and woke him, saying, "*Save us, Lord; we are perishing.*"

²⁶ And he said to them, "***Why are you afraid, O you of little faith?***" Then he rose and rebuked the winds and the sea, and there was a great calm.

Matthew 14:26-32 After a night of prayer, Jesus comes to his disciples as they row on the Sea.

²⁶ But when the disciples saw him walking on the sea, they were terrified, and said, "*It is a ghost!*" and they **cried out in fear**. ²⁷ But immediately Jesus spoke to them, saying, "***Take heart; it is I. Do not be afraid.***"

²⁸ And Peter answered him, "***Lord, if it is you, command me to come to you on the water.***"

²⁹ He said, "***Come.***" So Peter **got out of the boat and walked on the water and came to Jesus**. ³⁰ But when he saw the wind, he was afraid, and beginning to sink he **cried out, "Lord, save me."**

³¹ Jesus **immediately reached out his hand and took hold of him**, saying to him, "***O you of little faith, why did you doubt?***" ³² And when they got into the boat, the wind ceased..

Matthew 17:5-8 Jesus was "transfigured" in the presence of three disciples.

⁵ He was still speaking when, behold, a bright cloud overshadowed them, and a voice from the cloud said, "***This is my beloved Son, with whom I am well pleased; listen to him.***" ⁶ When the disciples heard this, they **fell on their faces and were terrified**. ⁷ But Jesus came and touched them, saying, "***Rise, and have no fear.***" ⁸ And when they lifted up their eyes, they saw no one but Jesus only.

Matthew 28:8-10 After his resurrection, Jesus meets the women leaving the empty tomb.

⁸ So they [Mary Magdalene and others] departed quickly from the tomb **with fear and great joy**, and **ran** to tell his disciples.

⁹ And behold, **Jesus met them** and said, "***Greetings!***" And they came up and took hold of his feet and **worshiped him**. ¹⁰ Then Jesus said to them, "***Do not be afraid; go and tell my brothers to go to Galilee, and there they will see me.***"

Hebrews 2:14-15

¹⁴ Since therefore the children share in flesh and blood, he himself likewise partook of the same things, that through death he might **destroy the one who has the power of death, that is, the devil,** ¹⁵ and deliver all those who **through fear of death were subject to lifelong slavery.**

Joy and Danger in Being Like Jesus

Jesus is sending the Twelve out (1) without ordinary resources, (2) with wonderful gifts to give, (3) vulnerable to people, (4) in view of great dangers – flogging, trial, betrayal, persecution, death. They will be like him in sharing his authority, but also his rejection: “Beelzebul”/Satan. As he makes the dangers so vivid as to frighten anyone, he tells them not to be afraid! How?

Fear is a crucial issue in the Gospel. The greatest challenge to faith is not unbelief but fear.

Mt 1:20 – Joseph must overcome fear to trust Mary and take her as his wife.

Mt 8:26 – The disciples’ natural fear of their boat capsizing challenges their trust in Jesus.

Mt 14:26-32 – Jesus’ presence puts an end to human fright and emboldens Peter, but natural fear of powerful wind overcomes his trust. Doubt, wavering, divided perception intervene.

Mt 17:5-8 – The disciples’ terror at the divine witness to Jesus helps them to see Jesus alone.

Mt 28:8-10 – The combination of proper fear and great joy makes the women run. Jesus’ presence lets them see the reality of his resurrection and overcomes fear.

Who Knows How the Universe Really Works?

Fear/worry besets disciples like other people every day from then to now. The world is a dangerous place, out of our control. We try to make our lives secure as best we can (money, power, health, religious piety), but always know we’re vulnerable. We live defensively. But we make mistakes, are often deceived. People are fickle, selfish, dangerous. Stuff happens. Add on persecution. Jesus never reassures the disciples that nothing bad will happen to them; they won’t suffer.

Jesus says “Don’t be afraid,” and talks about the hidden being revealed. Fear comes from our perception of how reality works, how vulnerable we are (Gen 3:10 naked and afraid).

Jesus says the ordinary perception of the world that says that money secures life is delusion.

The world that he has told them of in the Sermon on the Mount is true reality and will be revealed. Life founded on that reality can stand like a house on a rock in the midst of storms.

Learning Who and What is Really Fearsome

Fear works like Gresham’s law – bad fears drive out good fear. We’re enslaved by the fear of death (Heb 2:15) so that vast life resources go to staving off signs of mortality. But Jesus says that fear of the body’s death is deeply deceptive. It’s a universal event, sooner or later, and it’s not final. The person/life/soul (*psyche*) does not die with the body. No final threat.

The crucial issue is existence itself, which is in the hands of the God who created body and soul.

God alone is truly worthy of fear. Only life that he sustains continues, otherwise destruction.

Only the uncreated creator (trinity) has true immortality and can sustain a creature’s life.

Learning Who You Are and What You’re Worth

Jesus talks about sparrows and hair! God is vast beyond imagining and works on a tiny scale far beyond our perception (galaxies and quarks as well as hair and sparrows). It is the astonishing greatness of God that allows him to love, treasure, save, even a bit of matter as small as we.

When you know that you are secure in the delight of the only truly fearsome being in the universe, all other fears become small. Yes, the dangers are real, but passing. But the security of God’s love alone is permanent. When you know your worth in God’s eyes, you can live boldly, unafraid.