



**SERVICE OF PRAYER & MEDITATION
22 MARCH ANNO†DOMINI 2020**

Invocation

What Are You So Afraid Of?

And when He got into the boat, His disciples followed Him. And behold, there arose a great storm on the sea, so that the boat was being swamped by the waves; but He was asleep. And they went and woke Him, saying, "Save us, Lord; we are perishing." 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. And the men marveled, saying, "What sort of man is this, that even winds and sea obey Him?" (Matthew 8:23-27)

Fear. Fear is gripping our homes, our community, the nation, and the world. Such fear is not so much expressed in words as it is felt. You can feel the tension in the air. You can see the uneasiness on the faces of people you meet. You notice it in gestures and body language. There is an eeriness to the world. A sense of panic. The level of fear over the rapidly spreading virus known as Covid-19 has caused a dark cloud to settle over us all. The debilitating implications of this virus is on everyone's mind—consuming our thoughts, dictating our actions, governing our behavior.

Part of my job as a pastor is to observe and listen, diagnose and prescribe. Over the past few weeks, I have been observing and listening. And what I have noticed is life as we know it is rapidly changing. Just this past week, I listened to an elderly person confess how scared he is of contracting the virus. I listened to a small business owner express how she will be forced to close permanently in light of the government-mandated shut down. I listened to a student lament missing out on the last part of the school year. And they are certainly not alone in their suffering. For many the future is uncertain. Trips have been postponed. Programs and events cancelled. Schools are closed. The economy is tanking. Forced isolation. Sickness. Dying. Death. And what's more: it's still early days! What's next? What's on the horizon? What's around the corner? These questions fill us with dread. We are all immobilized (quite literally) by fear!

I have observed and listened. Permit me now to diagnose. The current malaise has caused me to think deeply about the nature of fear. And the more I pondered the internal workings of fear, the more I discovered that fear, understood in the right way, can be a godly virtue rather than a sinful vice. This might strike some of you as heretical seeing how Jesus in our reading asked the disciples, "Why are you fearful, O you of little faith?" Jesus seems to imply fear is tantamount and equal to a lack of faith. However, let us not be so quick to

jump to this simple conclusion. Instead, let us recall how in Isaiah 11 the fear is a gift of the Holy Spirit. Furthermore, the book of Proverbs teaches us, “The fear of the Lord is the beginning of wisdom”. So it appears the concept of fear admits of degrees; that there is a double meaning at play here. And it is this duality I want to explore with you. Let us make a distinction, then, between *servile fear* and *filial fear*. Servile fear is the opposite of the godly virtue of hope. For hope looks towards a future that is optimistic and longs for it. While servile fear does the opposite. It foresees a future that is grim and bleak and shrinks back from it. Hope compels us forward while servile fear holds us back. Servile fear lives up to its name: binding, chaining, enslaving. Central to the concept of servile fear is a curving inwards upon ourselves. And this is what makes this type of fear so dangerous. For hidden within all of us lurks pessimism, hopelessness, denial and rejection. It is precisely this servile type of fear that causes us to lash out in desperation and anger— at others, at God. It is this type of fear the disciples displayed in the boat when they lashed out at Christ, “Save us! We are perishing!” It is this type of fear that causes many in our time to lash out at God and view the current state of affairs as a sign of God’s abandonment, God’s anger, and God’s punishment.

It is easy to see how servile fear is sinful because its telltale characteristics are defeatist in nature and emit a strong odor of doom and gloom. Servile fear is a fear of the world, a fear of mankind, a fear of the blind forces of nature. It is a fear that leads unto despair. For this reason, we must reject such servile fear as harmful to our spiritual growth and wellbeing. In these dark days, it is a filial fear we most need. For filial fear is a fear that leads unto salvation. Filial fear produces within us a reverential submission to God rather than an abject servility to the cunning and schemes and forces of a fallen creation. Of course, this fear is not something we can produce within ourselves. Hence why we confess that filial fear is a gift of God. It is Spirit implanted, Spirit filled, Spirit led. Like the other virtues of faith, hope and love, God cultivates filial fear within us. Filial fear is of a different kind. It is cut from a different cloth. It too lives up to its name—comforting, assuring, befitting a family member. For filial fear is not like servile fear in holding us back. It exists in perfect harmony with hope. If hope is the pull then filial fear is the push. It pushes us away from ourselves and towards God alone wherein

we live, move and have our being. It pushes us to confess God to be “Our Father”. It pushes us onwards in childlike trust towards our benevolent God, who works all things according to His Will and for His good purposes and design.

Observation. Diagnosis. All that remains is Prescription. What does this mean for us now, in this place, in this time? Change. Change is coming. And like all change it can be terrifying. Change reminds us that we are not in control, and this is a scary thought. So when the virus finally runs its deadly course, and the world resumes its natural rhythms once again, we can be certain that many things will have changed. But let us face these dark days ahead not with a servile fear dreading the loss of property, security, jobs or even our very lives. For such fear can consume us. Let us face the days ahead with hope and courage and with a godly amount of filial fear. For our trust is not in the things of this world. After all, everything can be taken from us save the one thing needful. Our trust then is in God alone, who holds our very lives in His hands and works good out of all earthly disorders and upheavals. In life’s darkest moments, Christ is our light. In life’s chaotic moments, Christ is our rock and refuge. In life’s anxious moments, Christ is our peace, our rest. And although we will never fully understand the ways of God we trust Him. Christ promises to make all things new and lead us ever onwards towards a greater, more perfect reality where there will be no more suffering or pain or sickness or dying. It is precisely through such filial fear that the wisdom of such knowledge is produced within us. Amen.

In Christ,

PM

L In the name of the Father and of the T Son and of the Holy Spirit.
C **Amen.**

Opening Versicles

L This is the day which the Lord has made;
C **let us rejoice and be glad in it.**
L From the rising of the sun to its setting,
C **the name of the Lord is to be praised.**

L Better is one day in Your courts than a thousand elsewhere;
C **I would rather be a doorkeeper in the house of my God than dwell in the tents of the wicked.**
L Make me to know Your ways, O Lord.
C **Teach me Your paths.**
L Sanctify us in You truth.
C **Your Word is truth.**

L From the rising of the sun to its setting,
C **the name of the Lord is to be praised.**

C **Glory be to the Father and to the Son and to the Holy Spirit;
as it was in the beginning, is now, and will be forever. Amen.**

Reading From Holy Scripture

Psalm 46 (antiphon: v.7)

L A reading from Psalm, the forty-sixth chapter.

¹God is our ref- | uge and strength,*
a very present help in | trouble.

²Therefore we will not fear though the | earth gives way,*
though the mountains be moved into the heart | of the sea,

³though its waters | roar and foam,*
though the mountains tremble at its | swelling.

⁴There is a river whose streams make glad the cit- | y of God,*
the holy habitation of the | Most High.

⁵God is in the midst of her; she shall | not be moved;*
God will help her when | morning dawns.

⁶The nations rage, the kingdoms | totter;*
he utters his voice, the | earth melts.

⁷The LORD of hosts is | with us;*
the God of Jacob is our | fortress.

⁸Come, behold the works | of the LORD,*
how he has brought desolations | on the earth.

⁹He makes wars cease to the end | of the earth;*
he breaks the bow and shatters the spear;
he burns the chariots | with fire.

¹⁰"Be still, and know that | I am God.*
I will be exalted among the nations,
I will be exalted | in the earth!"

¹¹The LORD of hosts is | with us;*
the God of Jacob is our | fortress.

L This is the Word of the Lord.
C **Thanks be to God.**

Reading

Matthew 8:23-27

L A reading from Matthew, the eighth chapter.

And when he got into the boat, his disciples followed him. And behold, there arose a great storm on the sea, so that the boat was being swamped by the waves; but he was asleep. And they went and woke him, saying, "Save us, Lord; we are perishing." 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. And the men marveled, saying, "What sort of man is this, that even winds and sea obey him?"

L This is the Word of the Lord.

C **Thanks be to God.**

Responsory

L Forever, O Lord, Your Word is firmly set in the heavens.

C **Lord, I love the habitation of Your house and the place where Your glory dwells.**

L Blessed are those who hear the Word of God and keep it.

C **Lord, I love the habitation of Your house and the place where Your glory dwells.**

L Glory be to the Father and to the Son and to the Holy Spirit.

C **Lord, I love the habitation of Your house and the place where Your glory dwells.**

Catechism

The Fourth Petition

Give us this day our daily bread.

Give us today our daily bread.

What does this mean?

God certainly gives daily bread to everyone without our prayers, even to all evil people, but we pray in this petition that God would lead us to realize this and to receive our daily bread with thanksgiving.

What is meant by daily bread?

Daily bread includes everything that has to do with the support and needs of the body, such as food, drink, clothing, shoes, house, home, land, animals, money, goods, a devout husband or wife, devout children, devout workers, devout and faithful rulers, good government, good weather, peace, health, self-control, good reputation, good friends, faithful neighbors, and the like.

Creed

C **I believe in God, the Father Almighty,
maker of heaven and earth.**

**And in Jesus Christ, His only Son, our Lord,
who was conceived by the Holy Spirit,
born of the virgin Mary,
suffered under Pontius Pilate,
was crucified, died and was buried.
He descended into hell.
The third day He rose again from the dead.
He ascended into heaven
and sits at the right hand of God the Father Almighty.
From thence He will come to judge the living and the dead.**

**I believe in the Holy Spirit,
the holy Christian Church,
the communion of saints,
the forgiveness of sins,
the resurrection of the body,
and the life everlasting. Amen.**

Lord's Prayer

C **Our Father who art in heaven,
hallowed be Thy name,
Thy kingdom come,
Thy will be done on earth
as it is in heaven;**

**give us this day our daily bread;
and forgive us our trespasses
as we forgive those
who trespass against us;
and lead us not into temptation,
but deliver us from evil.
For Thine is the kingdom
and the power and the glory
forever and ever. Amen.**

Sermon *What Are You Afraid Of?! *See Attached*

Prayer

LSB 265

- L In peace let us pray to the Lord:
C **Lord, have mercy.**
- L For the gift of divine peace and of pardon, with all our heart and with all our mind, let us pray to the Lord:
C **Lord, have mercy.**
- L For the holy Christian Church, here and scattered throughout the world, and for the proclamation of the Gospel and the calling of all to faith, let us pray to the Lord:
C **Lord, have mercy.**
- L For this nation, for our cities and communities, and for the common welfare of us all, let us pray to the Lord:
C **Lord, have mercy.**
- L For seasonable weather and for the fruitfulness of the earth, let us pray to the Lord:
C **Lord, have mercy.**
- L For those who labor, for those whose work is difficult or dangerous, and for all who travel, let us pray to the Lord:
C **Lord, have mercy.**
- L For all those in need, for the hungry and homeless, for the widowed and orphaned, and for all those in prison, let us pray to the Lord:
C **Lord, have mercy.**
- L For the sick and dying and for all those who care for them, let us pray to the Lord:
C **Lord, have mercy.**
- L For . . . *[additional bids for prayer may be inserted here]* . . . let us pray to the Lord:
C **Lord, have mercy.**
- L Finally, for these and for all our needs of body and soul, let us pray to the Lord:
C **Lord, have mercy. Christ, have mercy. Lord, have mercy.**

Collect of the Day

- L Almighty and gracious Lord, pour out Your Holy Spirit on Your faithful people. Keep us steadfast in Your grace and truth, protect and deliver us in times of temptation, defend us against all enemies, and grant to Your Church Your saving peace; through Jesus Christ, Your Son, our Lord, who lives and reigns with You and the Holy Spirit, one God, now and forever.
C **Amen.**

Collect for the Word

- L Blessed Lord, You have caused all Holy Scriptures to be written for our learning. Grant that we may so hear them, read, mark, learn, and take them to heart that, by the patience and comfort of Your holy Word, we may embrace and ever hold fast the blessed hope of everlasting life; through Jesus Christ, Your Son, our Lord, who lives on reigns with You and the Holy Spirit, one God, now and forever.
C **Amen.**

Morning Prayer

- C **I thank You, my heavenly Father, through Jesus Christ, Your dear Son, that You have kept me this night from all harm and danger; and I pray that You would keep me this day also from sin and every evil, that all my doings and life may please You. For into Your hands I commend myself, my body and soul, and all things. Let Your holy angel be with me, that the evil foe may have no power over me. Amen.**

Blessing

L Let us bless the Lord.

C **Thanks be to God.**

L The almighty and merciful Lord, the Father, the T Son, and the Holy Spirit, bless and preserve us.

C **Amen.**

752 Be Still, My Soul

- 1 Be still, my soul; the Lord is on your side;
Bear patiently the cross of grief or pain;
Leave to your God to order and provide;
In ev'ry change He faithful will remain.
Be still, my soul; your best, your heav'nly Friend
Through thorny ways leads to a joyful end.
- 2 Be still, my soul; your God will undertake
To guide the future as He has the past.
Your hope, your confidence let nothing shake;
All now mysterious shall be bright at last.
Be still, my soul; the waves and winds still know
His voice who ruled them while He dwelt below.
- 3 Be still, my soul; though dearest friends depart
And all is darkened in this vale of tears;
Then you will better know His love, His heart,
Who comes to soothe your sorrows and your fears.
Be still, my soul; your Jesus can repay
From His own fullness all He takes away.
- 4 Be still, my soul; the hour is hast'ning on
When we shall be forever with the Lord,
When disappointment, grief, and fear are gone,
Sorrow forgot, love's purest joys restored.
Be still, my soul; when change and tears are past,
All safe and blessèd we shall meet at last.