



Free Evangelical  
Lutheran Synod  
in South Africa

## Sermon for Reformation Sunday 2017

*Do not be afraid!*



St. John's Lutheran Parish  
Shelly Beach

### • **The Word of God for this Sermon is written in Mt 10, 26-33:**

- <sup>ESV 26</sup> “Therefore, do not fear them. For nothing is concealed that will not be uncovered or hidden that will not be known.
- <sup>27</sup> That which I am saying to you in the darkness, speak in the light, and that which into the ear you are hearing, preach upon the rooftops.
- <sup>28</sup> And *do not fear* those who kill the body but are not able to kill the soul. But rather, *fear* the One who is able to destroy both soul and body in Gehenna!
- <sup>29</sup> Two sparrows are sold for an assarion, aren't they? And yet one of them will not fall upon the ground apart from your Father.
- <sup>30</sup> But even all the hairs of your head are numbered!
- <sup>31</sup> Therefore, *do not fear*; you are worth more than many sparrows.”
- *Let us pray: Come Holy Spirit, open our ears and our hearts so that we will truly get what you tell us and be inspired and become fearless to confess what You told us in the world!*

**Amen.**

### • **Dear Beloved of God!**

- Three times Jesus says: “*Do not fear!*” He obviously wants to highlight this assurance from His side. Do not be afraid! He says this to His disciples, whom He sent and still sends into the world. Why does He need to say this to His disciples? Was it a dangerous mission?
- What were they to do?
- Its the most radical mission ever with the most radical message, a word which radically exposes all evilness in humans and at the same time the even more radical good news, the free gift of God's Grace: Forgiveness of sins, Life and Salvation.
- There is no other religion which teaches so honestly and radically that all people are sinners, that nobody does good. There is no human being who is good, not even a little bit, in God's eyes. Its not true, as so many are saying, that there is something good in everyone. There is no person, since the fall into sin, whose love towards God and towards His neighbour is pure. We have all got

our hidden agendas. We are all much more concerned about ourselves than about our neighbours. We live a life curved into ourselves. We worry more about our own stomachs than about other people.

• And consequently, we tend to justify ourselves all the time. We don't even realise it. If somebody accuses us and says, you were wrong when you did this or that- what do we do? We try and justify ourselves. We turn things around so that we are always the victim. And most of the time there is some truth in our argument. We take that little bit of truth and blow it up to cover up the huge part which actually does accuse us. That is why we have to put so much effort in it, to try and get it larger than the other part. But, in the end, its like a balloon we blow up bigger and bigger, the bigger it gets the thinner the content, the more air is in it and soon, too soon, someone is going to put a little needle to it and our whole justification pops and explodes in our faces.

• And the worst of it all- we don't learn from our mistakes. Next time is around the corner, and guess what, we try to do the very same thing, again- thinking- no, not thinking, but blindly hoping this time nobody will notice- maybe this time we will get away with it.

• The problem with this revelation, if one takes it serious, is this: there is no human- made medicine for it. There is no muti that will heal it. There is no political system which will conquer it. There is no upbringing, no school, no knowledge, no amount of self-punishment, no amount of strictness or self-discipline attempts which can root out this thing in us. You just cannot get it out of your heart. Its born in, and it defiles and contaminates our whole person, our soul and body. It reaches everywhere. We are all infested and the cursed thing is contagious too. "They do it, why can't I also do it?" And soon everyone does it! So, the problem is that we cannot expect to solve this tragedy by human means! Nothing works.

• This is what the Law of God reveals to us. Wherever there is a lack of compassion and wherever sacrificial love is not absolutely pure, relationships eventually break down, corruption rises and we sit with chaos on earth. So, the Law of God relentlessly, persistently, all the time, exposes and accuses our old

Adam as being corrupt. Our old Adam does not like to hear this. This radical teaching of the Law of God, as Christ has revealed it, takes all hope away for a humanistic, that is a human only solution.

• Therefore, this radical teaching of original sin, is not welcome in the world. This teaching of the Law of God calls for a radical solution, a divine intervention of drastic proportions. God Himself will have to help, because what we need goes far beyond our capabilities. We need a new creation, a new beginning. We need a new Adam. We need a new heart. We need God's pure Love, completely without any corruption. A radical problem calls for a drastic solution.

• This takes us to the other side of God's revelation, the cure, the solution, the new beginning. This beginning and end is a person. God's own Son, born into the world, baptised to be God's first-born son of the new Israel, the new Adam. Baptised to suffer and to die in the place of Israel and of all gentile nations, on behalf of all people, so that all people can be baptised into the new Body of eternal Life.

• He took our place, under the wrath of God, so that we may be born again under the Grace of God and forever live with Him, our resurrected Saviour. Jesus Death and Resurrection changes absolutely everything! The curtains are pulled away for those who believe the Word of God. We see the whole cosmos with new eyes. We see people with new eyes. We see how the love of God, the compassion of the heavenly Father cares for every sparrow, cares for every hair on our heads. He is present in, with and under His creation for the benefit of all living creatures! What cannot be measured is revealed to us in the Gospel.

• There we see it revealed in the Baptism of Jesus, how God works through His ordained prophet, how His Holy Spirit comes down in, with and under the form of a dove, how that pouring out of water is the authorisation of God. It is Him baptising Jesus to in the end baptise us, through His ordained servants, here on earth. All, to make us part of God's new beginning. He gives us His pure Love. He assigns it to us, He speaks it onto us- you are my beloved son. He gives it to each one of us personally and so we become brothers of Christ. And so, we inherit what belongs to Him. He shares His inheritance with us, namely the pure

sacrificial Love of God, the very Spirit of God, which binds us to the Trinity and inspires us to love His Word.

- Then we hear our Lord saying to us, do not fear those who resist the Truth, but go into the world and proclaim what I have spoken to my disciples.
- The radical good news for sinners inspires us to confess our faith before the world, especially in times where the resistance against the Lord's will and promise is peaking. It will not always be possible to have a reasonable conversation. Sometimes we will have to confess, state what we believe, against all odds.
- Let us always remember what is at stake: God's pure Love is proclaimed on the backdrop of the pure Law of God. That is why Martin Luther was so adamant to keep the doctrine and teaching pure. If the church allows impurities to slip in even with the Law, the purity of God's Love is at stake. If God would not be serious with the pureness of His Love, then we would proclaim a god, who goes back on his word. Then we have a god we cannot take serious when he says, your sins are forgiven. But, thanks to God, He is uttermost serious about the pureness of His Love and therefore, when He says, your sins are forgiven, they ARE forgiven.
- It is purely God who saves us and He gives us His absolutely pure forgiveness. If we allow human impurities to have a part in our salvation, then our salvation is at stake. Yet, we also, may be in a way co-workers in God's salvation. Not in our own salvation, but as God's instruments in the salvation of others. We are to share the pure Gospel with those who are devastated by the wrath of God.
- It is in the world that we can give true hope, hope based on the pure sacrifice of the Son of God. We have something real and pure to share. We have something truly divine to serve. Therefore Jesus says: "Do not fear; you are worth more than many sparrows!" **Amen.**
- *The grace of the Lord Jesus Christ and the love of God and the fellowship of the Holy Spirit be with you all. Amen. (2 Cor 13, 14).*