

Sermon during Matins on St. Luke's gospel 12:2-12

The Grace of our Lord Jesus Christ, the love of God and the fellowship of the Holy Spirit be with you all
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"There is nothing concealed that will not be disclosed, or hidden that will not be made known. What you have said in the dark will be heard in the daylight, and what you have whispered in the ear in the inner rooms will be proclaimed from the roofs. "I tell you, my friends, do not be afraid of those who kill the body and after that can do no more. But I will show you whom you should fear: Fear him who, after your body has been killed, has authority to throw you into hell. Yes, I tell you, fear him. Are not five sparrows sold for two pennies? Yet not one of them is forgotten by God. Indeed, the very hairs of your head are all numbered. Don't be afraid; you are worth more than many sparrows. "I tell you, whoever publicly acknowledges me before others, the Son of Man will also acknowledge before the angels of God. But whoever disowns me before others will be disowned before the angels of God. And everyone who speaks a word against the Son of Man will be forgiven, but anyone who blasphemes against the Holy Spirit will not be forgiven. "When you are brought before synagogues, rulers and authorities, do not worry about how you will defend yourselves or what you will say, for the Holy Spirit will teach you at that time what you should say." (Luk 12:2-12 NIV)

Dear friends of our Lord and saviour Jesus Christ + He is the faithful and suffering servant of our God. Of him we hear from the prophet Isaiah in the Old Testament: ***"The Lord wakens me morning by morning, wakens my ear to listen like one being instructed. The Sovereign LORD has opened my ears; I have not been rebellious, I have not turned away."*** (Isa 50:4-5 NIV)". He is our good example. Him we should follow and become more and more like him - being ourselves instructed by the Lord our God, our maker and redeemer. He addresses us and wants us to give ear. He talks to us and wants us to hear. We should not be rebellious nor turn away either. Rather give close attention. Follow his instructions and do this morning by morning. Waking up and praying: "Speak Lord, Your servant hears!"

It's not like our God is into occult business and you have to go to strange, hidden and dark places. No, he invites you to come to church and hear his word preached. It's public. The doors are open and there are even signboards, bells and ushers, who invite you in: "Come, so that the house of the Lord may get filled! There is still room. You too are invited!" That call and gracious invitation has gone out to the very ends of the world. Apostles and disciples of the Lord went out 2 by 2 and proclaimed all that the Lord IX had entrusted to them in the markets and schools, in hospitals and prisons. Our Lord had entrusted to them the very essence of God's holy will and the saving truth of his precious gospel. This was the treasure of the church - not gold nor silver (that they didn't have!) - but the forgiveness of sins and the proclamation of God's favour and grace and therefore life & eternal salvation. This the missionaries, evangelists, teachers, bishops and all the rest of the faithful people making up the church had in their bags and hearts, in their books, letters and

on tablets as they travelled across the continents of this world - making disciples of all nations, baptizing them in the name of the Father, Son and Holy Spirit and thus carrying out the last will of their Lord and master IX, going about his mission of seeking the lost and proclaiming the justifying truth of God's forgiving love and mercy. It's all there in the holy Bible. That's all the prophetic and apostolic witness taught and entrusted to the Lord's disciples. It's holy essence and saving truth is summarized in the Catechism of Dr. Martin Luther and the holy Christian Church. It's all entailed correctly and authentically and in good, right and salutary measure and detail in the Lutheran Book of Concord. We sing about it in our Lutheran hymnals. We know it by heart. We pray about it. We talk about it. We think on it. We live accordingly - or at least we should and it's to our shame that we're not so good about this as we're supposed to be. We're still learning. We're still imperfect, but we're striving for perfection and listening more and more attentively as we meditate on his word, taking it right into our daily lives and letting it shine forth in its clarity and purity, effectivity and sufficiency as we go about our daily chores and callings. The word of God nurtures, instructs, punishes, corrects and guides, forgives, encourages and helps us as we face our daily challenges to live faithfully as Christians and cope with various temptations on the way too. That's how we listen as faithful servants too.

One of the most grievous temptations for any Christian is fear, because love and fear don't go together and neither do trust and fear. So wherever fear comes up, it threatens to intimidate us, take our focus away from Jesus and make us look elsewhere, it tries to drive out our trust and faith in Christ our Lord, but he has said: "Do not be afraid. Behold I am with you. I'm there with you to help and assist you. Nobody is going to harm you, because I protect you. Therefore be manly and strong, courageous and brave. Don't be afraid."

Don't fear death either. It's only temporal. It's brief and short. Rather trust in the risen Lord. Death could not keep him. Neither could the grave, nor hell, nor the devil. No, Jesus is alive and rules with the Father and the Holy Spirit - one living God - and you shall live too. That's his sure and unfailing promise. Therefore even if you go through death's dark vale - his rod and staff strengthen you. Therefore you have to fear no ill any more! The devil is history. His ilk lie vanquished. They're finished. IX however is your good friend and trusted brother. He has counted all your hair. He has everything in control. He's got the whole world in his hands. Even those little sparrows and wee little birds. He cares for them, but even more he cares for you. Not one of them falls to the ground, without him knowing. So he too guards your coming in and going out. He's truly Lord and king. Your destiny is in his good, caring and loving hands. Therefore there's absolutely no reason to be afraid.

Don't worry about human courts and powers either. They're just men - and nothing much in comparison with our Lord and God. Not even the mightiest among them, princes and presidents weigh up against him. They're just men. Don't count for much. They can't harm us really, because God himself is in control and he will take good care of us even if it sometimes doesn't look like it. Even if the courts of this world seem to have the last word and their prisons look

frighteningly permanent and so intimidating. Still - it's nothing for our Lord to free us from there or if it is his will to keep us right in there in the Gulag or on Robben Island or in John Voster Square by his peace and mercy. Just remember Daniel in the lion's den or Shadrack, Meshach and Abednego in the fiery furnace, Noah in the Arc or Jona in the big fish and the deepest seas too. Our Lord Jesus Christ said to Potius Pilate: "You would have no power over me if it were not given to you from above." (Joh 19:11 NIV) Nothing happens without God knowing and he allows only those things that serve to our best and benefit and ultimate salvation. Take the long view on things, not just the short one. In the end all will be well, because God himself will be all in all. Therefore take courage. Be brave, take heart and don't be afraid.

Finally the Holy Spirit himself vouches for us. His testimony, that IX is our Lord and saviour is our saving truth, trust and conviction. He vouchsafes that in our heart, but also before God's throne. He has taught us to believe, teach and confess the Christian creed, which I by my own strength and abilities can not believe. Still he has brought this blessed conversion, tied us to Christ, made us his very own and thus saved and kept us in IX all blessed days of our life. However whoever discards this spiritual testimony and forsakes this good confession and rather disowns Christ is lost and should wake up, repent and turn around without delay from his rebellious ways before it is utterly too late. There is nothing worse than closing your ears to the gospel of Christ and to the voice of his Holy Spirit. Such rebellion is a sure death sentence. You should really be afraid of that, because IX is the way, the truth and the light. There is no other way to salvation. Therefore listen to him and trust the divine testimony of the Holy Spirit for it is true, salvific and doesn't put to shame anybody who puts his trust in him. Therefore whoever has ears let him hear. And all praise, honour and thanks be to IX our Lord and God - now and always. Amen

His peace be with you always + Amen.

Hymn 655: *Lord, keep us steadfast in your word...*