

## **Do Not Let Your Hearts be Troubled**

May 4, 2021 Scott Gunn

*Peace I leave with you; my peace I give to you. I do not give to you as the world gives. Do not let your hearts be troubled, and do not let them be afraid.* — John 14:27

On the night before he dies, Jesus spends time with his disciples. On this extraordinary night, he shows them how to love by washing their feet. Jesus commands his disciples to remember him as they share the eucharist. He also spends time instructing his disciples how to carry on after his death, resurrection, and ascension to heaven.

Jesus pronounces peace upon them. And then he urges them to not to be ruled by fear. “Do not let your hearts be troubled, and do not let them be afraid.” It’s hard to imagine a universe in which the disciples aren’t afraid, given what they are about to experience. I think what Jesus is telling them is not to let their hearts be overcome with fear.

Fear is normal, but do we let it rule us? I am horribly afraid of wasps. Several times in my life, I’ve had to walk past wasp nests. The only way I do it is to confront my fear and then to deliberately press on, letting my greater purpose govern my fearful impulse.

It’s like that with the Christian faith. We may well be afraid. That’s normal. Sometimes our survival depends on our fear-filled instincts. But the key is to let our greater purpose govern our fearful impulses.

We can’t do it on our own. As Paul’s letter to the Philippians says, “Do not worry about anything, but in everything by prayer and supplication with thanksgiving let your requests be made known to God. And the peace of God, which surpasses all understanding, will guard your hearts and your minds in Christ Jesus” (Philippians 4:6-7).

If we can put Christ first, our hearts will be ruled by the peace of God, not by fear. It’s something we need to practice. It’s a gift from God for which we need to pray.

All around us, fear-mongering messages reverberate. Be afraid of those people! Be afraid of that place! Be afraid of leaving your home! Be afraid! The way we resist those calls to fearful living is to cultivate the peace of Christ in our hearts and minds. In other words, we need to let the voices of the scriptures be louder than the voices of fearmongers.

I don’t always get this right. But I’ve felt the peace of Christ enough times in my life to know that it sure beats any other way of living. I pray that your heart and my heart will not be troubled. I pray that we will know and share the peace of God which surpasses all understanding.