

“Do not be afraid, little flock..”

Luke 12:32-40, 8th Sunday after Trinity – 10 August 2025

When I was a young priest, serving in my last parish assignment before becoming bishop, there was a time when heavy rains poured over the city for days. I knew that some of our parishioners lived in low-lying areas, places that could quickly be swallowed by floodwaters if the rain didn't stop.

One afternoon, while the rain was still falling but the streets were not yet flooded, I went around the community. I visited the houses in those vulnerable areas and told the families, “If the water starts to rise, don't wait — come up to the church compound. It's on higher ground. You will be safe there.”

Some smiled politely, unsure if the flood would really come. Others seemed relieved that someone had thought of them. That night, the flood did come. And as the waters rose, I began to see familiar faces — mothers carrying children, fathers bringing whatever belongings they could, elderly members walking carefully through the rain — making their way to the church compound. In moments like that, fear is real. But the knowledge that someone is looking out for you, that there is a place prepared for you, changes everything.

In today's Gospel, Jesus says: *“Do not be afraid, little flock, for it is your Father's good pleasure to give you the kingdom.”* These are words of reassurance and promise. Jesus is telling us: You are not forgotten. You are cared for. You are safe in the Father's love.

When he calls us “little flock,” it is not to remind us of weakness, but of our belonging. Sheep are small, often vulnerable, but they are precious to the shepherd who will do anything to protect them. Jesus is that shepherd for us.

We sometimes think of God as a distant ruler who must be persuaded to help us. But Jesus tells us something completely different — God is a loving Father who delights in giving us the kingdom. This kingdom is not a far-off dream; it is God's reign of justice, peace, and mercy breaking into our lives here and now.

That is why Jesus invites us to live generously: “Sell your possessions, and give alms... make purses for yourselves that do not wear out...” When we know the kingdom is ours, we can stop clinging to possessions and start sharing them. We are freed from the fear of losing, because in God, we already have everything.

Jesus also tells his disciples to be dressed for action and to keep their lamps lit, like servants waiting for their master to return. Readiness here is not about anxious

watchfulness but faithful living. Back in that parish, I didn't go around warning people because I enjoyed imagining disaster. I did it because I wanted them to be ready if the flood came. And readiness, in that case, meant knowing where to go and trusting that a safe place awaited them. In the same way, our spiritual readiness is rooted in trust — that no matter what comes, God has prepared a place for us in his kingdom.

The early Christians lived in difficult and dangerous times. They were a small community in a vast empire, often facing suspicion and persecution. Yet they lived with fearless generosity: caring for the sick, feeding the hungry, welcoming the stranger. They understood that their security came not from the empire, but from God. For us today, fearless living might mean defending the dignity of the poor, speaking out against injustice, or caring for the earth even when others ignore it. In our daily lives, it could mean reaching out to reconcile, forgiving those who have hurt us, or sharing our resources when it would be easier to keep them for ourselves.

Perhaps the most surprising part of this Gospel is when Jesus says that the master, on returning, will fasten his belt, have the servants sit down, and serve them himself. This is not the image of a distant, demanding master. This is the image of Jesus — the Lord who kneels to wash the feet of his disciples, the Savior who feeds us with his own body and blood. Our readiness, our faithfulness, is not to impress him, but to be ready to receive his astonishing love.

That night of the flood, I saw fear in people's eyes as they came to the church. But I also saw something else — relief, even gratitude — because they had reached a safe place. It reminded me that our Christian journey is like that. We are making our way, sometimes through storms, towards the One who welcomes us and keeps us safe.

Jesus' words, "Do not be afraid, little flock," are not meant to deny the storms we face. They are meant to assure us that the Shepherd is watching, the safe place is ready, and the Father delights in giving us his kingdom.

We live in a world with many reasons for fear — economic hardship, social divisions, natural disasters, even personal struggles we keep hidden from others. But in the midst of it all, Jesus calls us to live without fear, not because life will always be easy, but because God's care for us is unshakable.

So let us live as that little flock — treasured, protected, and free to love without fear. Let us be ready, with our lamps lit and our hearts open, for the coming of the Master who serves. And let us remember that in Christ, our true refuge is already prepared. Amen.