

2nd Sunday after Trinity

²⁷ What I tell you in the dark, speak in the daylight; what is whispered in your ear, proclaim from the roofs. ²⁸ Do not be afraid of those who kill the body but cannot kill the soul. Rather, be afraid of the One who can destroy both soul and body in hell. ²⁹ Are not two sparrows sold for a penny? Yet not one of them will fall to the ground outside your Father's care. ³⁰ And even the very hairs of your head are all numbered. ³¹ So don't be afraid; you are worth more than many sparrows.

(Matthew 10: 27-31)

I don't think there are many people who haven't felt an element of fear as we come to terms with the worldwide spread of Covid-19. The speed of contagion, the accounts of its effects and the sheer number of deaths have all left us uncertain about our own safety. We might not express it as fear but the care we're taking to remain in our own homes and to limit our interactions with others show that we are at least concerned about our own futures. To be afraid for our selves in this extreme way is, at least in my experience, a new phenomenon for most of us in today's modern developed world.

But that's the crux of it, today's modern developed world. If we consider the world as a whole the vast majority of people live in circumstances where their continued existence is threatened every day by disease or violence. This last week was marked as Refugee Week, an annual event to support those who flee for their lives from disaster and persecution, people who are really and truly afraid for their lives. Even when they escape from those circumstances their lives don't always get much better – years in a detention centre can't be a big improvement.

This morning's passage from Matthew is directed far more towards circumstances familiar to refugees than to us in our comfortable homes. Jesus was preparing the disciples for the persecution they would experience as they proclaimed his message to the world. He was encouraging them to share the vision of the Kingdom of God even when this could lead to physical harm, because after all God values all creatures and they could trust in God's care for them.

I would hope that our fears of catching Covid-19 have been tempered by the knowledge that God cares for us and will keep watch on us through the pandemic. I wonder though, whether in our fears for ourselves we've forgotten the needs of others. As Christians we have to recognise that all people are valued by God and that, in following Jesus, we take on a responsibility to care for others and to speak out on their behalf.

One of the effects of the pandemic is that those charities which would normally support people in need have had their activities severely curtailed. As we remember the words of Jesus to tell in the light and proclaim from the house tops, maybe we can consider how we might speak up for those who have been even more incapacitated by the pandemic than we have. It might not make us popular but that's not what the gospel is about, particularly not this passage. So as we remember that God values us all, may we resolve to share his goodness in whatever way we can. Amen