

Exaudi

St. John 15:26—16:4

May 12, 2013

Grace to you and peace from God our Father and the Lord Jesus Christ.

How much of your life is spent in **fear**? We know people with phobias, sometimes crippling. Perhaps you have one that you've had to battle – or maybe never conquered. Fear of insects, spiders or wasps; fear of snakes; fear of flying, fear of heights, fear of crowds, fear of being alone. I know you fear for your kids and your country, our church, your future.

Societal fears reflect man's primal fear – anxiety over death. In my lifetime fear of nuclear holocaust was supplanted by fear of ecological devastation; and now, the global fear of the Coronavirus. All paint a picture of a world coming undone.

Holy Scripture reveals the source of all such fears: a Genesis 3 world, a cosmos created good but fractured, an earth seeped in blood as round us swirls the dust of billions of corpses.

David, who appeared fearless in battle—who faced the champion Goliath while yet in his youth—David is not ashamed to give voice to his fears in the Psalms. Those Psalms are the place for us also to turn in our fear, our anxiety, in the sleepless nights where you toss and turn and find no rest.

David knew the fear of an army encamped against him. He knew the fear of false witnesses telling lies, harming his reputation. He knew the fear of a son, Absalom, who turned against him and for a time seized the kingdom. Violence, political intrigue, slander, enemies bent on destruction – such is the story of our age and every age since the human race first felt the fear of a life without God.

What David does is what we must do. What David does is what the Psalms teach us to do, what all of our hymns teach us to do, what the liturgy teaches us to do: present our fear before the Lord and say: “**Hear.**” “*Hear, O LORD, when I cry with my voice!*” To be a Christian is not to have no fear, but to set your fear before the only One who can do something about it, the only One who has done something about it, the One who promises to **Help.**

So David cries out to the LORD, “*Hear, O LORD!*” He asks the same rhetorical question two ways: “*The LORD is my light and my salvation; whom shall I fear? The LORD is the strength of my life; of whom shall I be afraid?*” Can you hear him steeling himself for the onslaught? These are not the words of a happy warrior plunging into danger without a care, but a man afraid, assaulted in every way: enemies in the opposing army, enemies in his own family, the enemies of his own flesh, and the devil assailing his conscience.

Filled with fear, he cries out to God, “Hear my fears, and come to my aid, send me help.” And then, our lessons place us in the Upper Room with our Lord Jesus talking to His disciples. We are there with Him, with them. Uncertain about what lies ahead. The men are arguing, jostling for position. There is a traitor in their company. Enemies are waiting outside. Jesus Himself has no desire to face what is coming, but will beg the Father to find another way.

Yet in the midst of this fearful, crazy, chaotic night, a night of violence and darkness and what must have seemed like the end of all things, our Lord speaks, to His Apostles and to us: “*When the Helper comes.*” Here is good news! The Helper.

“Help” doesn’t do justice to it, not if we think of help as minor aid, a bandage for a paper cut, a room that needs a few bits of clutter tidied up.

It’s tempting to look at Christianity that way: I’m pretty good, but could use a little help: some of the clutter of my life tidied up; a few tips, tricks, and methods, and I’m back on track to success and glory, prosperity and inner peace.

If there’s clutter, you’ll need an organizer. If there’s a wound, you’ll need a bandage. But these are not your problems. The fears you have represent something far more substantive, a far greater problem. You don’t need a broken bone reset but a corpse revived. You don’t need a few mistakes overlooked but a world of sin absolved.

It is a corpse-reviving, sin-absolving kind of Helper that your Jesus sends. *The Spirit of Truth*, He calls this Helper, because He tells us the truth about ourselves and the world, and the truth about Jesus. The truth that the wages of sin is death, and the world will be judged, but also that the Son has borne the wages of sin, carried them into death, and the world’s judgment was heaped upon Him.

The help of the Helper is not in smoothing over life’s rough patches, for you’ll notice Jesus goes on to tell His Apostles that the world will hate them, they will be thrown out of the synagogues, and self-appointed servants of God will kill them. The Helper does not rescue from the world’s immediate problems but sustains us through and beyond them.

How? The Helper helped them, and helps you, by spreading repeatedly a table before you in the presence of all your enemies, and attaching His Word of Promise to the meal: promise of sins forgiven and life restored.

So come this afternoon, or as soon as you are able. Come as a helpless person, and receive the Help only this Helper can give. Come with all your fears and demand that the Lord hear them. He will help you with undeserved, everlasting Help.

In the Name of Jesus.

The peace of God, which passes all understanding, keep your hearts and minds in Christ Jesus.

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