

## Fear Not, Little Flock

### Luke Series #34

Luke 12:32

David Sunday

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In March of 2008, I wrote a quote on an index card and placed it on the bulletin board next to my desk. It has been there ever since. I'm not sure where I first read this quote which says, "When I worry, I'm imagining a future apart from the grace of God" (Stephen Altrogge). That stuck with me.

Life is full of potential anxieties and fears and Jesus is addressing the fears of His flock in this passage. He is on the way to Jerusalem where He will lay down His life on the cross for our sins. He has told His disciples: "*If anyone would come after me, let him deny himself and take up his cross daily and follow me*" (Luke 9:23). This world is hostile and no friend of grace. If we are going to follow Him in this world, we are also going to face hardships and sufferings. The disciples are struggling with different fears and anxieties. They are imagining a future apart from God's grace.

There is a promise in Luke 12:32 that is so comprehensive, it assures us we will never face such a future if we put our trust in Jesus. We will never face anything in our future apart from the grace of God. This promise has the power to conquer and dispel all our fears. It cuts off the fuel line that feeds our fears by getting to the heart of what lies underneath most of our fears.

Is it true?

The Lord has promised good to me,  
his word my hope secures;  
he will my shield and portion be,  
as long as life endures.

(from Amazing Grace by John Newton, circa 1772)

Will God continue to do good to be all the days of my life? Will I wake up one morning and discover that God was really out to get me after all? Will I ever face anything in my future apart from the grace of God?

This promise assures those who trust in Jesus that they will never face such a future. Look at Luke 12:32. I'm going to say it over and over again and I hope that by the end of the sermon you will have it memorized. "*Fear not, little flock, for it is your Father's good pleasure to give you the kingdom.*"

I'm going to follow the lead of John Piper in his wonderful book The Pleasures of God. In the epilogue, he meditates on this verse phrase by phrase. I want to connect the IV of the grace of this verse into the blood flow of our veins and draw upon it like a potent medicine that will combat our epidemic of fear. I want to draw on this verse to fight against the fears that molest our minds. Then I want to draw forth some of the implications of this verse from the larger context of the passage. If we really believe Luke 12:32 and take it to heart, what difference will it make in our lives?

First, I want you to imagine Jesus—our good Shepherd—gathering His little flock of sheep. We who trust in Him are that flock. He has pulled some of us out of a thorn bush and we are covered in brambles. He is carrying on His shoulders another sheep which has broken its leg. Another sheep wandered far away and the flock has not seen him for days. The Good Shepherd goes out, finds him and brings him home. Another sheep has fallen on its back and cannot get up again. The Shepherd sets him up straight on his feet.

He has us all where He needs us and is saying, “Come close, My flock. I know you are worried and anxious. Hush. Hush. Do not fear, My little flock, for it is your Father’s good pleasure to give you the Kingdom.”

Let’s look at these words phrase by phrase:

### 1. **“Fear not...”**

Did you know this is the most repeated command in the Bible? Some say the Bible says, “Fear not” or “Be not afraid” 365 times; once for every day in the year. God wants His disciples to stop being afraid of what they should not fear.

Who designed fear? Was it God or the devil? In this passage, Jesus does tell us there is a fear we should cultivate—the fear of God. Jon Bloom, President of Desiring God Ministries, writes,

“Fear is something God designed, not the devil. God designed fear so that we would flee real danger. Fear is meant to be a mercy. Its purpose is to direct us to safety. When our soul is ordered right, we fear the Lord and turn away from evil (Job 28:28). But the devil perverts reality with his lies and seeks to use fear on us backwards. He wants us to fear evil and turn away from the Lord.”

Jesus understands how Satan uses fear to pervert. He knows the devil uses fear to tell us lies, turn us into liars and send us into hiding. Satan uses fear to tempt us to commit many sins. Jesus commands us to fear not in those ways. It is not a suggestion but a command: “Do not be afraid.” Thankfully, the One Who gives us this command has the power to fulfill this command in our lives. He has the power to take

the weakest man—the man who is unfit for battle or to face any kind of struggle—and turn him into someone who is more than a conqueror through His grace. He has the power to dispel our fears.

We hear our Savior say, “*Fear not...*” (Luke 12:32) and respond in the words of St. Augustine: “Command what You will; but give what You command!” You tell us not to be fearful but it is in our nature to be afraid of many things. Savior, deliver us from our fear of many things. When we call upon the name of our Lord Jesus in that manner, He has the power to dispel our fears and make us fearless in the right sense of the word. Then we can say with the Psalmist:

*I sought the LORD,  
and he answered me and delivered me from all my fears.  
Those who look to him are radiant,  
and their faces shall never be ashamed.  
This poor man cried, and the LORD heard him  
and saved him out of all his troubles (Psalm 34:4-6).*

“Fear not” says the One Who is able to deliver us from all our fears. Thank Him for that. Whatever you are anxious about or whatever fear seems to have its grip on you, thank God that the One Who says, “Fear not” has the power to fulfill that command in your life.

## 2. “***Fear not, little flock...***” (Luke 12:32)

Don’t you love the phrase ‘little flock’? It is tender and diminutive, like a parent saying to their newborn, “Little one.” Our grandparents might say something like this as they gather us close. It is a term of affection—a way of saying, “I know you are scared, weak and trembling on the inside. But I am able to protect you, defend you and meet your needs. I care about you for you are precious to Me, My little flock.”

Aren’t you glad Jesus does not look at our weakness and despise us for it? He does not look at us and say, “Can’t you get over that?” Our weakness tenderizes His heart toward us. He sees us as His little flock and cares for us. The phrase ‘little flock’ assures us that God is not good to us because of our greatness, strength, wisdom or righteousness. He knows how little we are in strength, wisdom and righteousness. Yet our littleness and weakness does not stop Him from saying, “I’m going to lavish on you all My goodness.” His pouring out of goodness does not hinge on our strength or our deserving nature.

“*Fear not, little flock...*” for He is tender to you, assures you He is good to you and is your Shepherd. When He calls us his ‘flock,’ He is reminding us that He is the great Shepherd spoken of in Psalm 23. Because He is our Shepherd, we shall not want. All the things we worry about and the anxious thoughts that crowd our minds are tempting us to think we might face something in our lives apart from

His grace. He is saying, “No. I’m your Shepherd; you are My little flock. Nothing will come into your life that I have not already foreseen or cannot take care of. You shall not want.”

**3. “Fear not, little flock, for it is your Father’s good pleasure...”**

Jesus does not say, “He is My Father” but “He is your Father,” meaning: “I am inviting you into My relationship with God. He is My Father but through Me He is going to be Your Father.” A ‘Father’ in the best sense provides care, protection and provision.

John Piper points out that Jesus thankfully does not say, “Fear not little flock, for it is your employer’s good pleasure to give you your salary.” He doesn’t say, “It is your slave-master’s good pleasure to give you your lodging,” or even, “It is your King’s good pleasure to give you the Kingdom.” No, He says, “...it is your Father’s good pleasure to give you the kingdom.” That means we are heirs—sons and daughters of the King. We have rights and prerogatives. You could put “H.R.H.” meaning “His Royal Highness” next to the name of every child of God. He has made us princes and princesses in His heavenly Kingdom. It is our inheritance.

One day we will hear Jesus our King say, “*Come, O blessed of my Father, inherit the kingdom prepared for you from the foundation of the world*” (Matthew 25:34). From before the foundation of the world, God has been preparing a Kingdom for His sons and daughters—those adopted into His family by the blood of His Son, Jesus. This Kingdom is our inheritance and He is delighted to give it to us.

**4. “...it is your Father’s good pleasure to give you the Kingdom...” (Luke 12:32)**

He doesn’t give us this Kingdom out of duty, a sense of obligation or because of a contract in which He desperately wants to find a loophole. He has no mixed motives in what He gives us, no secret harboring of resentment, no half-heartedness. He rejoices in doing us good with all His heart and soul. It is His good pleasure to give us—His little flock—the Kingdom. When He gives it, it will be the expression of a full, glad heart. We will experience the lavish expression of a generous heart when we receive that Kingdom.

**5. “Fear not, little flock for it is your Father’s good pleasure to give you the Kingdom.”**

He gives it to you. He does not sell it to you if you can pay the right price or barter it in exchange for goods and services. He does not rent it to those who are able to afford the rent. He gives it and does not collect taxes from those in the Kingdom. It is a gift because He is a great Giver Who is not stingy.

John Piper says, “God is a mountain spring and not a watering trough.” There is no end to what He is able to give and He delights to overflow in goodness—to give to His little flock.

## 6. “...to give you the Kingdom”

What does He give us? The Maker of the universe is the One Who created all the galaxies, rules in perfect justice and righteousness, sits in the heavens on His heavenly throne, speaks and all fulfill His command. Before Him angels ceaselessly worship and adore; all splendor and majesty are at His disposal. Yet He is willing to give us all that in His Kingdom.

Think of the rule and reign of God and what it means to inherit His Kingdom. It means all the resources of His sovereign majesty working for our good. I think of 1 Corinthians 3:21-23. “*So let no one boast in men. For all things are yours, whether Paul or Apollos or Cephas or the world or life or death or the present or the future – all are yours, and you are Christ’s, and Christ is God’s.*” He withholds nothing and lavishes all the riches of His Kingdom on us.

“*Fear not, little flock for it is your Father’s good pleasure to give you...*” What? Not dollars. He doesn’t promise you money or riches in this life. Money is fleeting and will not last. He doesn’t promise fame or that you will end up on American Idol with everyone ‘oo-ing’ and ‘ah-ing’ over how popular you are. He doesn’t even promise us safety from all the threats of this present evil age. Andrew reminded us of what our brothers and sisters in Christ went through behind the iron curtain for decades. We will die and suffer, like all the rest, until Jesus comes. Knowing that your death is the gateway to glory brings joy and peace. It will be the summons to the final disposition of your inheritance and the grand unveiling of the Kingdom of God in its fullness.

If you do not know this joy and peace, “*Fear not, little flock for it is your Father’s good pleasure to give you the kingdom*” (Luke 12:32). This world is a hostile place. If you are going to follow Jesus, it will involve hardship—garden-variety sufferings as well as more intense difficulties due to your being a follower. That is the cost of discipleship. Yet Jesus is saying, “In the end, you will look at the price you paid and say it was nothing compared to the gift given.”

In Alabama, the members of the Sixteenth Street Baptist Church remember that on September 15, 1963, the members of the largest and most elite black church in Birmingham, Alabama, gathered for Youth Sunday. Justin Taylor tells the story on his blog, “Between Two Worlds.” I would encourage you to read the article.

They were celebrating Youth Sunday. The boys wore dark pants and white shirts and the girls wore white dresses. One of the girls was wearing little high heels for the first time. They came to hear a

Sunday School lesson called “A Love that Forgives” on Jesus’ words from the Cross: “*Father, forgive them; for they know not what they do*” (Luke 23:34).

Little did they know that four members of the Ku Klux Klan had planted 19 sticks of dynamite underneath their church. The 14-year-old Sunday School secretary, Carolyn Maull, picked up the phone and heard a man’s voice simply say, “Three minutes,” and she heard him hang up. She was confused. Moving through the church, she saw the clock on the wall register 10:22 am. That is when she heard the blast that would kill four young girls who were attending Sunday School that morning: Addie Mae Collins (age 14), Cynthia Wesley (age 14), Carole Robertson (age 14) and Denise McNair (age 11 – a friend and schoolmate of eight-year-old Condoleezza Rice, who could hear the bomb down the street from her father’s church). You could hear the blast two miles away.

That is the kind of world in which Jesus’ disciples are called to follow Him. It is a world where evil and injustice are sadly not uncommon. We need to know if there is a Word that can prevail above all earthly powers—the evil, wickedness and oppression of this world. The comforts we enjoy right now are not normal for Christ’s disciples. The ‘norm’ is hostility, suffering and denial of self. Is there a word that can prevail above all earthly powers that will give us calm, confidence and cheer our hearts that we belong to the One Who has overcome this world? I believe we are looking at that Word in our passage. It is a Word we need to memorize and take to heart: “*Fear not, little flock, for it is your Father’s good pleasure to give you the kingdom.*”

I think Martin Luther King, Jr. believed that Word is true. Because of that, he could say three days later in a eulogy to those who were grieving:

I hope you can find some consolation from Christianity’s affirmation that death is not the end. Death is not a period that ends the great sentence of life, but a comma that punctuates it to more lofty significance. Death is not blind alley that leads the human race into a state of nothingness, but an open door which leads man into life eternal.

The reason those are not empty words is because the One Who spoke Luke 12:32 was on the road to a cross where He would die to conquer death, sin and Satan. Three days later, He would rise—not for a eulogy—but to reign at the right hand of the Father almighty. All authority in heaven and on earth is His and He has the authority to promise His fearful little flock: “If you could see what I see, you would know it is your Father’s good pleasure to give you the Kingdom. I died on the cross because I didn’t want to be in this Kingdom alone. I desire to gather all my children from every tribe, language and nation to be with Me before the throne of God and worship in a new heaven and new earth where there will be no more sin,

sorrow, perplexity, mourning, death or darkness.” Jesus is our King, Shepherd, Savior and elder Brother. He says, “*Fear not, little flock, for it is your Father’s good pleasure to give you the kingdom.*”

Do we trust and believe Him? Does His Word cheer us in the midst of our troubles and sufferings? Is this Word alive for us today? If so, it will not merely help us face death with confidence but it will transform the way we live. This passage is about all the ways God has spoken to dispel our fears.

## Application

There are so many applications in this passage that all I can do is encourage you to read it in light of verse 32. Realize no power of hell or scheme of man can ever pluck you from the hands of the One Who says, “It is My good pleasure to give you My Kingdom.” As you read this passage, I would like you to pay attention particularly to two areas of application that I think are very much needed for Christ’s disciples and the way we live our lives. If the promise of Luke 12:32 sinks in and changes the way you live, there are a number of characteristics that will appear in your lives.

### 1. **If we fully believed this promise, it would free us from the crippling fear of man.**

If we really believed our Shepherd when He says, “*Fear not, little flock, for it is your Father’s good pleasure to give you the kingdom,*” it would free us from the crippling fear of man. We need to be delivered from this fear. Proverbs 29:25 says, “*The fear of man lays a snare, but whoever trusts in the LORD is kept safe.*” What is the fear of man? I think the title of Edward T. Welch’s book describes it so well: When People are Big and God is Small. When people’s approval means a great deal and God doesn’t seem like such a big deal.

This was a big problem of the Pharisees. Jesus says, in Luke 12:1, “*Beware of the leaven of the Pharisees.*” We see how the fear of man snared them in a couple ways; these can also snare us:

- a. Hypocrisy before men (verse 1)
- b. Infidelity before God (verses 8-12)

Jesus is saying in Luke 12:1-12 that if the fear of man is ruling our lives, it will lead us into hypocritically pretending to be something we are not in order to please men. It will also lead us toward infidelity and we will be afraid to acknowledge Christ before men. Jesus is saying there is one fear you need to cultivate that will free you from fear of man. It is the fear of God. Jesus is telling us in Luke 12:4-7 that if we fear God, we will fear nothing else. If we do not fear Him, we will eventually live in fear of

everything else. He says, “*I tell you, my friends, do not fear those who kill the body, and after that have nothing more that they can do*” (Luke 12:4).

Stop there for a minute. Nothing more? What more could be done beyond killing the body? Jesus says, “There is a lot more to your existence than the death of your body. The death of your body is not the end of your existence. Life is short; eternity is long. Heaven is real and so is hell.” Jesus says, “*But I will warn you whom to fear: fear him who, after he has killed, has authority to cast into hell. Yes, I tell you, fear him!*” (Luke 12:5).

This week, thousands of people worry about a hundred things that will never come to pass yet they never give any thought to God, heaven or hell. Jesus is telling us that is insane. God, heaven and hell are real. Fear God, for when you fear Him you will have nothing else to fear.

What does it mean to fear God? It means to trust Him, yield your life to him, stand in awe of Him, bow before Him, submit to Him and depend on Him. When you do these things, you discover you are trusting in One Who tells you:

- He will never forget you (verse six).
- You are of more value to Him than the sparrows he clothes so faithfully and takes care of so meticulously (verse seven). He is committed to taking care of your needs.
- He knows you so well that all the hairs of your head are numbered (verse seven).
- If you stand true to Him before the men, He will acknowledge you before the angels of God in heaven (verse eight). When you come into the heavenly Kingdom, you are not going to have to show your documents or passport to prove you belong. You will not come as an alien or stranger; instead the angels of God will stand and rejoice that you are coming home because God will acknowledge you in their presence. It will be a grand welcome into the heavenly Kingdom for those who have acknowledged Christ before men.

Fear Him and you will discover you are trusting in, submitting to, worshipping and yielding your life to the One Who knows and loves you so well that He is pleased to give you His very Kingdom. It’s an awesome thing to fear God but not a terrifying thing if you trust in Jesus. It is a lovely thing to fear the Lord. The more you fear Him, the less you will fear the face of man. You will be able to say with the Psalmist:

*Out of my distress I called on the LORD;  
The LORD answered me and set me free.  
The LORD is on my side; I will not fear.  
What can man do to me?  
The LORD is on my side as my helper;  
I shall look in triumph on those who hate me.  
It is better to take refuge in the LORD than to trust in man.  
It is better to take refuge in the LORD than to trust in princes (Psalm 118:5-9).*

## 2. If we fully believe this promise, it would free us from bondage to finances.

We keep the money aspect of our lives separate from the faith aspect of our lives but Jesus ties them together very tightly. You will see as you read through this passage that financial bondage can take on many forms. Two of these are:

A) Greed and covetousness (verses 13-21).

We see this in The Parable of the Rich Fool. Here is a man who thinks, “I have to build bigger barns to accumulate more stuff and find security and safety in the things I possess. One day I will be able to look at my soul and say, “*‘Soul, you have ample goods laid up for many years; relax, eat, drink, be merry’*” (Luke 12:19).” He is finding his security in the accumulation of earthly goods. He is not living like a sheep in need of a great Shepherd or like a child trusting in a heavenly Father. He is living like he has to fend for himself—as if there is no kingdom to live for other than his own.

To the one who lives like this, God says, “*Fool! [you don’t know that] This night your soul is required of you’*” (Luke 12:20). Jesus says, “*Take care, and be on your guard against all covetousness [beware of believing your inheritance rests in getting more things] for one’s life does not consist in the abundance of his possessions*” (verse 15).

B) Fretting and worrying that you will not have enough (verses 22-34).

This is living as if there is no glorious future in store for you; as if you will face something in your future apart from the grace of God. This produces anxiety in our lives and worry that we will not have enough. Jesus says, “*And do not seek what you are to eat and what you are to drink, nor be worried. For all the nations of the world seek after these things, and your Father knows that you need them’*” (Luke 12:29-30). People live this way when they do not have a heavenly Father Who is pleased to give them the Kingdom. Don’t live like the nations that cannot imagine a future that is full and bright with the grace of God. Instead, trust in your heavenly Father Who knows your needs (verse 30). Trust that He cares for you deeply and considers you very valuable (verse 24) and hold to the hope that it is His good pleasure to give you His kingdom (verse 32).

When you do that, here is how you will live:

- You will seek His Kingdom first (verse 31).
- You will let go of goods and possessions and sell things to give to the needy (verse 33).
- You will invest in heavenly treasures that will not grow old “*...where no thief approaches and no moth destroys’*” (verse 33). If you put your heart on seeking the things of this eternal Kingdom, your money and investments will follow, “*For where*

*your treasure is, there will your heart be also*” (verse 34). Give your investments and money to those things that will last forever. Let your hope in the promise of verse 32 be reflected in the way you handle your investments in this world.

Who is the fool? Is it the one who holds on to what he can only keep for a short time and then loses it all in the end, along with his soul? Or is it the one who gives up what he cannot keep, to gain a Kingdom he can never lose?

As we look at this application, all of us probably see areas where money, possessions and goods have too tight a hold on our hearts. We might wonder how we will ever inherit the Kingdom if it depends on how well we are investing and giving. We need to remember Jesus is saying this is the pathway for those whose hearts are set on heaven, not the price. It is not how we earn our way into the Kingdom. There is One Who has perfectly lived this way on our behalf. There is one named Jesus Who said:

Let goods and kindred go, this mortal life also,  
The body they may kill, God's truth abideth still:  
His kingdom is forever!

(from A Mighty Fortress by Martin Luther, 1529)

Jesus laid down His life on the cross so we could be welcomed into His heavenly Kingdom. When we trust in Him, He tells us to follow Him on this path. Now that He has won this Kingdom for us, He wants to call our hearts to see this Kingdom also.

When you seek this Kingdom and sacrifice earthly treasures for investment in this Kingdom, you will find you do not seek God in vain. You seek the One Who delights in doing you good. When you follow Him on the path to the cross and count all things lost for the sake of the Kingdom of God, Jesus says that you will not be disappointed. Why? Because of the promise of Luke 12:32 “*Fear not, little flock, for it is your Father's good pleasure to give you the kingdom.*”

Your glorious cause, O God, engages our hearts  
May Jesus Christ be known wherever we are  
We ask not for ourselves, but for Your renown  
The cross has saved us so we pray  
Your kingdom come

[Chorus]  
Let Your kingdom come  
Let Your will be done  
So that everyone might know Your Name  
Let Your song be heard everywhere on earth  
Till Your sovereign work on earth is done  
Let Your kingdom come

Give us Your strength, O God, and courage to speak  
Perform Your wondrous deeds through those who are weak  
Lord use us as You want, whatever the test  
By grace we'll preach Your gospel  
Till our dying breath

Let Your Kingdom Come, words and music by Bob Kauflin  
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