



PEACE RIVER NEW CHURCH CURRENT

NEWSLETTER OF THE DAWSON CREEK CHURCH OF THE NEW JERUSALEM

DECEMBER 2012



FEAR NOT

By Rev. Coleman Glenn

We tend to think of the Christmas season as a season of hope and laughter and joy. And it is all of those things, and it should be all of those things. But we celebrate Christmas during the darkest time of the year, and the light and joy of Christmas shines out brightly in part because it is in contrast to the darkness that presses in around it. The story of the Lord's birth is a story of great joy - but it is a story that is touched with fear, where the message must be given over and over again - "Do not be afraid."

What do we fear? For a lot of us, fear isn't something we experience particularly consciously most of

the time. We experience it as nagging worries and concerns. Parents experience some level of fear for their children - will they be OK? Will their lives work out? Are they going to make choices that hurt themselves, or will they make good choices? And the bigger fears have to do with our own responsibility: have I let them down? Am I failing them as a parent?

We have other fears, too - fears of failure, fears of our own evil, fears of death. Darkness and fear live together, and all of us go through times of darkness, where it's hard to see the light of God.

The fear in the Christmas story takes place in darkness - but reading carefully, we see that it's actually light that triggers the fear. The angels who appear throughout the Christmas story are the ones inspiring fear at first! It's easy to understand why. Prophecies and visions had become increasingly rare for centuries before the Lord's advent - to see an angel would have startled anyone. But more than that, there had always been a fear among the children of Israel that if they saw God or an angel, it meant they were about to die. To see an angel was terrifying.

And so every time an angel appears in the Christmas story, there is fear. For example, in the story of the shepherds we read, "And there were in the same country shepherds abiding in the field, keeping watch over their flock by night. And, lo, the angel of the Lord came upon them, and the glory of the Lord shone round about them: and they were sore afraid" (Luke 2:8,9). We can well imagine why this might be frightening - alone in the dark in the middle of the night, and suddenly there's a man standing in front of you, surrounded by a brilliant light.

And the truth is, that fear they initially felt was not a bad thing. There is a good kind of fear - what the Word calls "the fear of God," a holy fear. We experience that kind of fear at the appearance of God in our lives in brilliance. In times of darkness, we can be lonely and afraid - but when we suddenly realize that

God is with us, that He knows all of our thoughts, that He is directly present - it can be terrifying. We realize just how unworthy we are. There's an awe that comes from realizing we are in the presence of God - when "the glory of the Lord" shines around us.

That response of fear can be good, especially when it is a fear of violating anything from the Lord. But it can also be crippling if we do not allow the Lord to then lift us up. And so immediately the angel said to the shepherds, "Fear not: for, behold, I bring you good tidings of great joy, which shall be to all people. For unto you is born this day in the city of David a Saviour, which is Christ the Lord" (Luke 2:10, 11). There is no need to fear - the angels are there to bring good news - the saviour has come! There message is not one of destruction, but of salvation, to all the people.

That same message is given to us. We have our fears and our worries, and they can be more acute when we realize that the Lord is present with us in all our imperfection. But He comes not to destroy, but to save; we can receive Him, we can transform our lives to receive His life. Does it seem impossible? Think how much more impossible the angel's promise to Mary seemed - that she would bear the Lord. But the angel said, "Do not be afraid." Think of the impossible task of Joseph - to trust that his betrothed wife Mary had been faithful and would continue to be faithful. But the angel said to him, "Fear not to take unto thee Mary thy wife: for that which is conceived in her is of the Holy Spirit." To be free from fear is to trust that the Lord is guiding all things to a good end.

The coming of the Lord should make our hair stand up on end, should fill us with unspeakable awe, and yes, fear - the fear of the Lord that means fearing to do Him any harm. But the message of Christmas is that we can be freed from slavery to our own sins, and so from slavery to the fear of death. At John the Baptist's birth, his father Zacharias prophesied, "Blessed be the Lord God of Israel; for he hath visited and redeemed his people...; That He would grant unto us, that we being delivered out of the hand of our enemies might serve Him without fear, in holiness and righteousness before Him, all the days of our life." (Luke 1:68-69, 74-75)

We can rest in the hope and promise that if we live in love to God and charity toward our neighbour, we will be saved, that the whole world can be redeemed. And despite how impossible it may seem, we are given the good news that we *can* love our neighbour as ourselves, because God Himself has come into the world to be with us and give us new life from Himself in us - to create in us a heart that does not fear, but trusts in Him and loves Him and His people.

CHRISTMAS TABLEAUX

The Christmas Tableaux (or "Living Pictures") will take place this year on December 23rd at 5:00 in the evening, to be followed by a hot potluck supper. Please note that there will not be any morning church services that day.

Also, we still need someone to organize the tableaux! We have a few people who have volunteered to act as helpers, and Rev. Coleman Glenn will help out as well, so it shouldn't be *too* big a job. We need you!

CHILDREN'S CHRISTMAS PARTY

Children up to age 12 and their parents are invited to attend a Christmas party at the church following the church service on December 9th. Please bring a small gift (less than \$5) that could be given out as a prize. **Please RVSP to Jillian Crandall by December 7th;** if you forget to RSVP please feel free to come, but it would be helpful to have a rough estimate of how many to expect. Thank you!

ANNUAL MEETING

The annual meeting of the Dawson Creek Church of the New Jerusalem will take place on January 20th, 2013, immediately following the morning church service. Besides the regular business, we'll need to elect two new board members. Please come out and support the church - attending a meeting may not be the most glamorous way of serving the church, but it's very useful and needed. Thank you!

THE DAWSON CREEK CHURCH OF THE NEW JERUSAEM

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Worship: Sundays at 11 a.m.

If you have news or other information for this publication, or if you have any pastoral concerns, please call the pastor, Coleman Glenn, at (250) 782-8035 or (cell) (250) 467-2313, or email pastor@dawsoncreeknewchurch.ca.

CHURCH CALENDAR

DECEMBER 2012

SUN	MON	TUE	WED	THU	FRI	SAT
25	26	27	28	29	30	1
2 11 a.m. Family Service 4:30 p.m. Worship & Class (Grande Prairie)	3	4	5	6 7:30 p.m. Doctrinal Class (Silver Valley)	7	8
9 11 a.m. Traditional Service 12:30 p.m. Children's Christmas Party	10	11	12	13 7 p.m. New Church 101: The Lord's Advent	14	15
16 11 a.m. Traditional Service 4:30 Christmas Service (Debolt)	17	18	19	20	21	22 7:00 p.m. Holy Supper Service
23 5:00 p.m. Christmas Tableaux (followed by potluck supper) No morning service	24	25 11 a.m. Christmas Day Service	26	27	28	29
30 NO SERVICES	31	1	2	3	4	5

Note: All events take place at the Dawson Creek Church of the New Jerusalem unless noted otherwise