

Theme: "Do Not be afraid, I am with you!"

Text: Acts 18: 1 – 23

Season: Rally Sunday, 18th Sunday after Pentecost

Date: September 18, 2016

Place: Shepherd of the Rockies LCMS, Bailey, Co

Grace and peace to you as you live in the assurance of God's love, from God, our Father, our Lord and Savior, Jesus Christ and the Holy Spirit. Amen.

What do you have to be afraid of in your life, here along the 285 corridor? Well let see, we could have a forest fire that could destroys all that we have with just a lighting strike, a flick of a cigarette or a careless spark. A car could suddenly go across the double yellow centerline along 285 and crash into you, killing you or severely injuring you and your family. A mad man could start shooting at you as you are watching a movie, traveling down the road or going to school. Yes, even in our quiet country living along the 285 corridor there are a lot of things that we could be afraid of and many of them could quite possibly happening at any time. So what's stops you from living in fear each and every day of your life? What enables you to live at peace in this world when the news reports are constantly telling us about all the evil and violence going on in our world? That's the situation that we find the Apostle Paul dealing with this week, as we continue to read through the Acts of the Apostles.

Now over the past three weeks we have been reading about the Apostle Paul's second missionary journey. Could you live at peace in your life if you have been beaten and thrown into jail at one of the cities you visited to proclaim the Good News of Jesus Christ? Could you live at peace in your life if you had been dragged before the magistrates, then dragged outside the city walls to be stoned and then left as dead in another city that you visited to proclaim the Good News of Jesus Christ? Could you live at peace in your life if at every city that you went to proclaim the Good News of Jesus Christ the devil was stirred up a crowds to wanted to get rid of you in any way that they could? Well this is where we find the Apostle Paul in the 18th chapter of the Acts of the Apostles. The Apostle Paul has been beaten, wiped, imprisoned, stoned and chased out of every city that he had been too along his missionary journey through Macedonia and Greece and now he is in Corinth. Corinth is a large city of trade and wealth situated on the narrow isthmus between the Greek mainland and the southern peninsula of Greece.

As the Apostle Paul arrives in Corinth he gets to know two other Christians, Aquila and Priscilla from Rome, whom he stays with and share in the works of being a tent or leather

workers. For the first several weeks in Corinth the Apostle Paul works with Aquila and Priscilla during the week but on the Sabbath he goes to the synagogue to proclaim Jesus Christ as the true Messiah to the Jews. The Apostle Paul finds success in bring both Jews and Gentiles to faith in Jesus Christ, especially after Silas and Timothy return from Philippi, Thessalonica and Berea. With the success of bringing more people to believe in Jesus Christ as their Savior, comes the conflict of the devil stirring up the Jews to try to stop the Good News of Jesus Christ. As the conflict begins once again the Apostle Paul asks God for guidance on staying or leaving Corinth. God comes to the Apostle Paul in a dream one night and says, "**Do not be afraid, but go on speaking and do not be silent, for I am with you, and no one will attack you to harm you, for I have many in this city who are my people.**" (Acts 18:9 – 10)

**'Do not be afraid,'** these are the words that God uses over and over again throughout the Old and New Testament to encourage His people to be assured that He is with them even when it looks like the world is stacked against them. "**Do not be afraid,**" God says to Abraham, Jacob, Moses, Zechariah, Mary and many others before He does incredible things through their lives. "But I'm not one of God's important people of the Bible or of history," You might be saying to yourself right now. But we are important to God and God says to each of us, "**Do not be afraid, but go on speaking and do not be silent.**" As God's people who believe and trust in the promises of God we have heard about throughout the Bible, God is working miracles through us to proclaim the Good News of His love given to all through Jesus Christ. **Do not be afraid** to talk to your family, friends and neighbors about the Good News of Jesus Christ in your life. **Do not be afraid** to talk to someone you just met as you were doing your daily work or sharing the assurance you have by believing in the work that God has done for you. **Do not be afraid** to show your love for God and others in a world that looks for faults in others instead of God's blessings.

**'Go on speaking and do not be silent,'** about all that God has done for all of mankind through the life, death and resurrection of Jesus Christ. We live in a world that tells us to be silent and tolerant with the Good News of Jesus Christ, but that's not going to save them from the evil and hatred of sin, death and the power of Satan has brought into their lives. No, speaking and proclaiming the Love of God for all mankind is the only way that the peace, comfort and assurance of God will come into the lives of people in this world despite what the world is tell us. **Go on speaking and do not be silent** about the love of God that has changed

your life and can change the lives of each and every person in this world as they let the Holy Spirit work in their lives through God's Word and Sacraments.

God says to us, **"I am with you, and no one will attack you to harm you."** Our God is a personal God who is standing beside us each and every step of our lives. Will bad things happen in our lives? Yes, because we live in a world filled with sin, but through trials and difficulties we become stronger witness of God's love and God is working through our lives to save others from sin, death and the power of the devil. Oh yes, Jesus came into this world some 2000 years ago to live a perfect life for us and to conquer sin, death and the power of the devil by His life, death and resurrection, but each of us are the messengers of God's Good News to the world, one person at a time. God gave the Apostle Paul fellow Christians like Priscilla and Aquila to work with him when he felt all alone in this world and God gives each of us fellow believers to give us the assurance that we need as the world tries to attack us and take the Good News of God's love from our lives. God is with us and says to us, **"I have many in this city who are my people."**

In the past 18 weeks of Pentecost we have been asking ourselves as we read the Acts of the Apostle, 'How does God work in our lives to bring the kingdom of God to us?' This week, as we have seen in many other chapters of the Acts of the Apostle, God is showing us that He works through others to provide us with the help that we need when the evil of this world tries to attack us. This week it was the Roman proconsul of Achaia by the name of Gallio, who enforce the laws of the land instead of listening to the sinful world to protect the Apostle Paul. God has His hands in the laws of our land and can work through even people who do not believe in His truth to protect us from the evil of this world. God's people are in our community and in our churches to help us and to encourage us not to be afraid because God's hands are everywhere guiding and protection us from the evil of this world, if we will only let Him work in our lives.

**'Do not be afraid,'** to let God work in your life and through your life to guide you in His love, peace and comfort that comes through His Word and Sacraments. **'Do not be afraid,'** to let God's Word shape your life so that you stand up for the good in others instead of the evil that the world is proclaiming.

**Do not be afraid, but go on speaking and do not be silent,"** For each of us have been given the Good News of God's love for all the world and as we proclaim what God has done for us we are participating in God's Church and spreading the Good News that builds His church up along the 285 Corridor and into all the world.

**Do not be afraid, but go on speaking and do not be silent, for I am with you,**” are the Words of Jesus to us as they were the Words of Jesus to the Apostle Paul when he feared what was coming into his life once again. God allowed the Apostle Paul to find peace, comfort and assurance even when the world was searching for a way to persecute him. God is with each of us also so that His Good News can be shared with others even in the midst of turmoil and confusion. Yes, by God’s Word, Sacraments and fellowship with others we are given the peace, comfort and assurance of God’s love in our lives.

**Do not be afraid, but go on speaking and do not be silent, for I am with you, and no one will attack you to harm you, for I have many in this city who are my people.”** Those are the words of Jesus to us today as we celebrate this Rally Sunday in 2016. Each year we are reminded just how important it is to rally our members around the Word of God as it was in the days of the Acts of the Apostles. Today we Rally around God’s Word because it gives us the peace, comfort and assurance that we need in a world filled with all sorts of reasons to be afraid to live and speak up about the Love of God given to us. Yes, we are not alone in this world but we are God’s people brought together to give us the peace, comfort and assurance that God is with us and the world can not harm us because we have a mighty God who has conquered the evil of this world and has given us a better life in His love, grace and mercy now and for all eternity.

Oh, it’s never easy to rally around God’s Word and proclaim it to others, but when we do rally together we are reminded that God is with us and will protect us from the harm that the world wants to inflict upon us so that we can speak out the Good News to all the world with the courage that only the Holy Spirit, working in our lives, can give us. **“Do not be afraid, but go on speaking and do not be silent, for I am with you, and no one will attack you to harm you, for I have many in this city who are my people.”** Those may have been the words of God to rally the Apostle Paul in Corinth, but they are also God’s word to us today as we rally around God’s Word to proclaim God’s Good News to God’s children in our Worship, Sunday School and Bible Class and in every situation that we find ourselves on each day of our lives. Amen.

Let us pray: