**Sermon on “Dealing With Fear” Based on 2020 Matthew 21:23-32**

**I was curious about the chief priests and the elders in the time of Jesus. I decided to look into what the Sadducees and the Pharisees believed. I thought these two sects would represent the influential figures of the Jewish people so long ago. This is some of what I discovered. “The Sadducees thought of themselves as ‘conservatives,’ as the Old Believers. This is because they accepted only the written Law of Moses as authoritative and rejected subsequent revelation. On the other hand, The Pharisees were a lay group more representative of the common man. In addition to the written Law of Moses, the Pharisees accepted as authoritative the rest of what is for us the Old Testament, as well as the wisdom of the elders.” This is a very short explanation of what the Sadducees and Pharisees represented during the time of Jesus.**

**I find it interesting how these two sects parallel our two present political parties. Except the Sadducees and the Pharisees had one thing in common, they both feared and disliked Jesus’s teachings and his ideas. Both sects viewed him as a rabble rouser and a threat to their very belief systems. Today our two political parties seem to have little in common, and their lack of accord and agreement on any issue is hurting our country.**

**Wouldn’t it be lovely if our two political parties decided to put aside their many differences and place their collective energies into working on stopping this terrible pandemic we are all experiencing in many different ways? It’s hard to even imagine over two-hundred thousand people have already died in our country and by the end of the year the death toll may go as high as four-hundred thousand souls lost to their family and friends. My heart hurts all the time for the continued spread of this plague. Wouldn’t it be lovely if our leaders just stopped and listened to the cries of the families and friends who mourn their loved ones? What might happen if they turned their whole attention on stopping this pandemic?**

**Don’t we all think Jesus would have been gratified if the Pharisees and Sadducees had answered his question on that day so very long ago. He asked them, “Did the baptism of John come from heaven or was it of human origin?” He had already told them if they answered his question, he would tell them by what authority he did his works. Instead of answering Jesus’ questions, the group of chief priests and elders turned to one another and started arguing. They didn’t answer his question because they were afraid of the crowd. So they answered him and said, “We don’t know.” It’s a really silly answer, and Jesus didn’t tell them where his authorly came from for all he taught and accomplished while he was on earth.**

**Fear can stop any of us until we might not do anything or say anything to help each other. Yet in our time we do have many reasons to be afraid. Afraid we too might catch Covid 19, afraid of the outcome of the upcoming election, afraid of all we see on television, afraid of climate change as it devastates the west coast and east coast of our country. Yet I know fear is a destroyer. It can stop us from doing what we know is right and good. It can stop us from reaching out to one another in the best way we can. It might even keep us away from our Lord and savior. We might stop reaching out to him and beseeching him to give us ways to help support one another and our earth.**

**Yet our faith has given us many ways to reach out and ask God to help us stop fear from ravishing our lives. Each of us can start by saying these wonderful words from Psalm 40. “… I desire to do your will, my God; your law is within my heart.”  From Isaiah these well-known words said as a simple prayer can give us strength and courage to let fear drop away from us “… here I am Lord, send me.” I believe simple prayers, repeated often enough, help take away our fear of the times we find ourselves living through. Words offered up to God helping us not to be afraid will be heard by God. Simple prayers will help us always remember we are the beloved children of God.**

**There are 365 times do not fear is written down in the Bible. The fear of the chief priests and elders stopped them from giving Jesus an answer when he asked them a question. We are told 365 times not to be afraid in the Bible because fear can stop us from being able to help God’s earthly kingdom grow in the light of God. Here are two quotes from the 365 quotations our Bible offers us. They have helped me and I pray they will also help you. From Deuteronomy, “He will never leave you nor forsake you. Do not be afraid; do not be discouraged.” From Romans, “For you did not receive the spirit of slavery to fall back into fear, but you have received the Spirit of adoption as sons and daughters, by whom we cry, Abba Father!”**

 **I know none of us ever expected to find ourselves in a pandemic and a contentious national election. Yet here we are and as the children of God we can help the causes we believe in and want to support if we don’t let fear stop us. I believe we each are on earth for a reason in these difficult times. Here are just a few reasons we are on earth in this time and place. We’re here to support one another. We’re here to lift up in prayer those who have died and ask God to help each and every loved one who mourns. We’re here to support what we believe in with all our heart. We’re here to be generous with one another in all the ways we can be generous. We’re here to love and to never stop loving all life surrounding us on our beautiful blue marble.**

**We are here at a time and place to bring about small miracles through our love and devotion to one another. We are here to laugh and to cry and to find joy and to live our lives in the fullness of God’s great love. May we be at peace, may we learn to love just a little bit more each day of our lives. May God continue to shine down on each and every one us, holding us in his loving arms. Amen**