

Grace, mercy, and peace be unto you from God, our Heavenly Father and Jesus Christ, our Lord and Savior. Amen! Dear Brothers and Sisters in Christ:

[Introduction]

We just returned from a week at Walt Disney World – the vacation kingdom. When we left, there was tornado warnings and strong thunderstorms. When we were at Disney, we walked through an afternoon and evening of drizzle. When we returned, we were greeted with snow covered ground
and wind chill of single digits.
In a short span of time, we have seen several different kinds of storms.

The same is true for our lives as well.

In a short span of time, we see several different kinds of storms.

We have a lot of storms in our lives, don't we?

And don't mean just the environmental storms, but turmoil.

And storms are scary, no matter what kind.

What are some of the storms that you are dealing with now?

What are some of the storms that are striking fear in your heart?

Maybe it is a diagnosis you recently got from the doctor.

Maybe it is the upcoming birth of a baby.

Maybe it is a big test you are getting ready to take.

Maybe it is a new job you are about to start.

Maybe it is financial troubles,

the possible breakup of a marriage, or

the decline of a loved one you will now be responsible to care for.

Maybe you have fear of terrorist attacks or all the evil in this world.

All of these are part of the swirling storms of life that bring us fear.

[*Answer*]

How do we deal with ... these many fears we are facing?

We find an answer in the very cross of Christ.

When we look to the cross we see our Savior there.

Even in his weakened state, Jesus did not shrink back in fear,

but let himself be crucified for our sake

so that the very real fears of our lives

would not have power over us.

Because of the cross,

we have the confidence of knowing fear is not something

that should consume us or dictate our behavior.

As 1 John 4:18 reminded us,

“There is no fear in love, but perfect love casts out fear.”

And love is all that is present on the cross.

The Father’s love for us transcends any fear Jesus may have

and his love for us is what should overtake any fear we may have.

There is no need for fear

We must recognize that the things that should cause us the most fear

all have been done away with.

Sin, death and the devil have no more hold over us,

so we don’t need to fear them anymore.

[*Dealing*]

Some people *DEAL* with their fears.

They deal with their fears by

avoiding them,

staying at home and

not encountering anything that might possibly threaten or harm them.

But we are told in the Bible that we should not live in fear.

*“For God did not give us a spirit of timidity,
but a spirit of power, of love and of self-discipline,”*

2 Timothy 1:7 tells us.

Followers of Christ and his cross are not to slink back in the shadows
when things get rough.

We remember that after Jesus died on the cross,

the disciples hid behind locked doors out of fear of their enemies

UNTIL ... until the risen Jesus came into their midst and said,

“Peace be with you.”

We as Christians need to open up the parts of our lives that have been locked by fear.

It is time to swing wide the portals of our lives

that have been shut down for so long because of trepidation.

Time is too fleeting for us to hold back in fear

when so many people still do not yet know Jesus

and are themselves mired in fear of sin, death and the devil.

This Lent, therefore, I challenge you to face your fears head-on.

This Lent, I challenge you to do those things that make you a little uncomfortable
or fearful.

- Talk to your neighbor who seems to always have a scowl.
- Say a prayer before a meal in a restaurant.
- Make an appointment with the doctor.
- Schedule time with a financial planner.
- Perhaps see a counselor to help you deal with problems you are having.
- Call someone you have been afraid to contact for one reason or another and see how they are doing.
- Share your faith with your family and friends.

For as the Bible says,

and as Jesus himself said to his disciples

when he was in the midst of a very fearful situation

in the Garden of Gethsemane, about to be arrested:

“The hour has come for you to wake from sleep.

For salvation is nearer to us now

than when we first believed” (Romans 13:11).

It is time for us this Lent to do away with our fears

and prepare for the salvation of our souls.

Christ came and conquered the cross

so that we can conquer every storm that comes our way.

We must listen to that still, small voice that Elijah heard.

That voice that the disciples heard so long ago on a wave-tossed boat on that rough sea:

“Peace. Be still.”

And everything was calm.

Be calmed by Christ today and every day for everything obeys him. AMEN!

Now to him who is able to do immeasurably more than all we ask or imagine, ...
to him be glory in the church and in Christ Jesus throughout all generations,
for ever and ever! AMEN!