

Words for an Emerging Church

Wednesday, November 10, 2021

Chicken Little's Other Mistake

*No king is saved by the size of his army; no warrior escapes by his great strength.
A horse is a vain hope for deliverance; despite all its great strength it cannot save.
But the eyes of the Lord are on those who fear him,
on those whose hope is in his unfailing love,
To deliver them from death and keep them alive in famine.
We wait in hope for the Lord; he is our help and our shield.
In him our hearts rejoice, for we trust in his holy name. —Psalm 33:16-21*

The sky is falling! The sky is falling! We must run and tell the king! —Chicken Little

The folk tale of Chicken Little, the young hen that was struck by a falling acorn and became convinced that the sky was falling, is a beloved and enduring story, and for good reason. This cautionary tale of multiplying fear and mass hysteria reminds us of the nature of our fearful human disposition, and historians suggest that similar tales go back as far as 2,500 years! Fear multiplies and spreads easily, especially when the threat is difficult to visualize and quantify.

We live in a fearful time and this anxiety is not helped by the fact that the threats before us—COVID, a ballooning deficit, global warming—are difficult to see and accurately appraise. We do not want to ignore such troubles, nor do we want to get caught up in a spiral of fear which always leads in dangerous directions. Chicken Little has given us fair warning regarding this spiral.

While Ms. Little has been roundly criticized for her loud shouts of panic, there is another error committed by our beloved bantam which has been completely overlooked. I refer to her loud and confident affirmation that *We must run and tell the king!* What, in heaven's name, was the king going to be able to do about the sky falling? Even if this terrible fate was about to fall upon all the living, the king would be as helpless as you and me to change the situation.

With each passing day, and especially for those who subscribe to cable news, it does feel as though the world is falling apart. The troubles before us are real and menacing and this folk tale is a precious proverb for our times, for it cautions us against two serious errors. We must not fall prey to fear, and perhaps more significantly, we must not become obsessed with earthly leaders who can do little or nothing to actually address the problem.

This is not to get Harrisburg or Washington off the hook completely as they each are responsible for delivering to us good governance, justice, and a reasonable response to the

problems which call for political action. But there is so much that government cannot do, or can only make worse. One would not know this from looking at the world around us and the endless appeals and attention focused upon our government regarding countless issues. We even have experts in Washington finding ways for us to stop hurting each other's feelings on social media. Chicken Little is alive and well and running an office in D.C.

While countless folks of all political persuasions go running to tell the king, we are called to appeal to the one true King, the Lord of heaven and earth. This King truly cares, and not because He is up for re-election and needs our vote. The King's love for us is made clear by the sending of His Son. This King has the power to transform our lives and give us a genuine hope. This King holds us safely in His hands, and despite appearances, has the world under control, working all things for His glory and for our salvation. This King is preparing a Kingdom which will endure forever and runs no deficits.

The world believes that they have learned the lesson of Chicken Little and would not be so foolish as to fall into silly hysteria. Even if that is true, let us proclaim to the world the other and even greater lesson. If you are going to run and tell the King, be sure that you are pursuing the right one.

Blessings,

Pastor Jim

What is before us, we know not, whether we shall live or die; but this we know, that all things are ordered and sure. Everything is ordered with unerring wisdom and unbounded love, by thee, our God, who art love. Grant us in all things to see thy hand; through Jesus Christ our Lord. —Charles Simeon, 1759-1836

Lord, our heavenly Father, who orderest all things for our eternal good, mercifully enlighten our minds, and give us a firm and abiding trust in thy love and care. Silence our murmurings, quiet our fears, and dispel our doubts, that rising above our afflictions and our anxieties, we may rest on thee, the rock of everlasting strength. —New Church Book of Worship, 1876