

Rick Suraci - Fear Not

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Luke 12:32 says, Fear not, little flock, for it is your Father's good pleasure to give you the kingdom. His good pleasure. When Jesus came in his first advent, he paid the price for Adam's sin by willingly offering himself in death as a ransom with his life. He established the call of the Church to become ministers of reconciliation with him for the sake of the whole world. When Jesus returned, he came to end Satan's reign and terror and to re establish the physical nation of Israel in their land and to claim his church to be with him in the heavenly realm.

He came to do a lot of things. We stand near the end of this process. How close? I don't know, but it's near the end of this process. He came to claim the church, to be with Him.

And we are those feet members. Surely these are thrilling times. You look around and it's exciting, but it's also scary. Sometimes what happens around us, not just in the world, but in our life experiences, can be frightening, and then we can start to ask questions.

It's late. Why did the Lord call me? What if? But why don't I? How come it's not?

And we have all of these questions. Luke 12:32 says, Fear not, little flock. It is your Father's good pleasure to give you the kingdom. The word for fear in this scripture, and this is an important thing because this is the theme of our discussion this morning. The word for fear means to frighten passively, to be alarmed.

The Greek English lexicon says, to put to flight by terrifying, to be struck with fear, to be seized with alarm. The word for not doesn't mean take your fear, crumple it up and throw it away. It means more of a changing of your mind. So the way we're going to look at this is Jesus is saying, I know you're afraid, but you don't have to be because, and then we'll fill in the blank.

And that goes for all of us. To live a life of consecration is to live a life of following. It's following the Word of God. It's following spiritual principles over earthly preferences. We all know what it means is following as best as we can in our Master's footsteps.

So how do we do this? How do we follow where he tells us to go? Well, first, the big picture. Luke 9:23, in the words of Jesus, Luke 9:23, he says he was saying to them all, if anyone wishes to come after me, he must deny himself, take up his cross daily and follow me. Okay, self denial.

Self denial is not Natural, it is not instinctive. It is a learned set of behaviors, and that's what consecration is. Consecration is a learned set of behaviors. Now this process, this learned set of behaviors is actually revealed to us in Jesus words over his ministry, in the words fear not.

Those two words. When you follow when Jesus spoke those words, those two words to his followers, it actually lays out the process of our consecrated life, and that's how we're going to approach consecration today.

Seven points, seven times. Jesus said fear not to his followers. Now he said, fear not to Jairus. We're not going to get into that example, but we're going to be talking about him talking to, specifically to his disciples. The first point is at the point of being called, and we're going to watch how this progress through our consecrated life unfolds.

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And Jesus at every stage says what? Fear not the call. Sometimes when the call to follow Jesus is revealed, it's scary.

If we have that fear, we're in good company. The apostle Peter was drawn to Jesus three different times over a period of months before he finally, literally left everything and followed him for good. We're going to drop in on Simon's third experience of finally getting to the point of actually leaving everything to follow him. It's in Luke 5, verses 4 to 11. Jesus has been preaching to a crowd.

He's sitting in Simon's boat and it says, and when he had finished speaking, he said to Simon, put out into the deep water and let yourself and let down your nets for a catch, and Simon answered, and he said, master, look, we worked hard all night. We caught nothing, but I will do as you say, and he let down the nets.

And when they had done this, they enclosed a great quantity of fish and their nets began to break. So they signaled to their partners in the other boat for them to come and help them, and they came and they filled both of the boats so that they began to sink.

But when Simon Peter saw that, he fell down at Jesus feet and he said, go away from me, Lord. I'm a sinful man. Essentially, he said to Jesus, what are you doing with me?

He could see the power of God working through him, and it was overwhelming. You know that feeling.

And here's what Jesus said to Simon. Fear not. He said, look, I'm paraphrasing. I know you feel fear, but you don't have to, and then he said, fear not.

From now on, I will make you fishers of men. He said, don't worry. I've got something in store for you. When they brought their boats to the land. They left everything and they followed him.

The call to consecration can be full of uncertainty. We don't know. Fear not.

You don't have to be afraid. As we begin to be drawn to God through Christ, we can experience the turbulence of life. Brethren, we've all gone through trials, and sometimes others don't even know about the trials that we're going through. Things don't go the way we had imagined or hoped for, and just like Simon fishing all night and catching nothing, he had a physical, earthly plan.

This is what we do. We fish at night, we catch our fish, and then we can cash in and keep our families fed. Didn't work. His life wasn't going the way it was supposed to, and Jesus shows up and changes everything, and he changes his direction in the process.

Jesus message to Simon, at this calling, this fear not, at this calling was very simple. Now Jesus is saying to Simon, and we're paraphrasing, now, as you follow me, I know that your own sin seems overwhelming. It seems unconquerable. But I say to you, follow me. Trust in me, so you can now do it without needing to fear.

For in my, in Jesus strength, you can become fearless fishers of men. So at the call, at the very drawing from Jesus, he says, fear not. Then we have to answer the call. The answer. Our consecrated walk begins.

And we are symbolizing that literally today for Sister Laurie. Once we've made the commitment, let's strive to put aside our fears as we acknowledge and trust the leading of our Heavenly Father

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through Our Lord. Psalm 32:8. Psalm 32:8. A promise.

I will instruct you and teach you in the way you should go. I will counsel you with my eye upon you. Think about that. You can get counsel from somebody and they can look it up in a book and say, for this circumstance, we have this solution. Or you can get counsel for someone who knows you, who watches you, and who says to you, I know you, and I will counsel you because I know you.

That is what that promise is saying. You know, brethren, our lives don't change overnight just because we answered the call. On the contrary, we often experience the very same doubts, the very same fears, the very same inconsistencies that we did previously. We wake up the next day after consecrating and saying, I don't feel different. You know why?

Because you're not. Because you now are just beginning the process of the growth with God's spirit, and when you don't see things change like that, sometimes this can. From A human perspective accelerate our natural fears. Fear not.

You don't need to be afraid. You don't see. Jesus knew this would happen, and he explained our new reality in the context of the Sermon on the Mount. So in the answering of the call, we're going to go to the Sermon on the Mount and remember that sermon was preached to his disciples, and all the crowds listened in, and here are some of the things he said to his disciples about that change that answer.

We're going to read from Luke, chapter 12, verse 25, and then 27 to 32.

And which of you, by worrying, can add a single hour to his lifespan? Verse 27. Consider the lilies, how they grow. They neither toil nor spin. But I tell you, not even Solomon in all of his glory was clothed like one of these.

The beauty and the delicacy of a flower, and he's saying, stop and just look. But if God so clothes the grass and the field which is live today and tomorrow is thrown into the furnace, how much more will he clothe? You, you men of little faith, and do not seek what you will eat or what you will drink, and do not keep worrying for all these things the nations of the world eagerly seek. But your Father knows that you need these things.

I want to pause there. Doesn't mean you sit at home and say, well, I guess I don't have to work because I don't have to worry, and there must be a delivery coming. Not going to happen. Take care of ourselves. But the point is, do what you're called upon to do in the physical, earthly world and see if we can do it without worry.

Because the Father knows you have need of these things. But seek first his kingdom, and all these things will be added to you. So what that means is seek first his kingdom in the context of taking care of your responsibilities without worry as much as possible, all these things will be added to you, and then in verse 32, Jesus says it again, do not be afraid. Fear not.

Fear not, little flock. It is your Father's good pleasure to give you the kingdom. He wants you to have it. This is a gift that he says, Laurie, I want you specifically to be a part of this, and then we look at that and we say, but wait, wait.

I don't know. I don't think I'm worthy. You're right, you're not. I don't think I can. You're right, you can't.

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I don't think I know how. You're right, you don't. What we know is that we learn to let go, and Jesus himself says, I know you're afraid, but you don't have to be because it's God's enthusiastic pleasure to give you his kingdom. The life of consecration is a life of very specific priorities.

And brethren, we all know this. It's a life where we learn to go about our daily lives and take care of our earthly responsibilities as a subset of our devotion and service to the Lord, the truth, and the brethren, fear not. You don't have to be afraid. I know you feel fear, and that's okay.

And that's the point of fear not. It's. You feel it, and Jesus isn't saying, well, stop feeling it. He's saying, it's okay.

But just understand, you don't need to be there. As the issues of life continue, we continue as best as we're able to prayerfully prioritize what we can and how we can, and does it go well the first time? Probably not, and do we make mistakes?

I could tell you about mistakes, but we don't have to be fearful. The third point so we've got the call. We've got the answer, and now we've got the engagement. Living that consecrated life, being involved in the work of consecration.

As our consecrated walk progresses, let's view the physical circumstances of our lives through the Heavenly Father's eyes. One of the key factors where we as brethren get frustrated is when we look at our lives and we see them. We get frustrated with what we're seeing, and if we can just stop for a moment and say, well, what does the Heavenly Father see? It gives us a whole different perspective.

And when we see things through his eyes, our human circumstances can change because we will see his courage. Joshua. Everybody knows Joshua. He needed to see things this way when he stepped into the impossible task of leading Israel. Now, very quickly, Moses is off the scene, and you've got this huge nation of needy people and Joshua's next in line.

You talk about impossible. Talk about taking Moses seat. Imagine how he felt, how scared he would have been. Here's what the Lord said to him. Joshua 1:9.

Have I not commanded you? Be strong and courageous. Do not tremble or be dismayed. For he doesn't just say, stop being afraid. Suck it up.

He doesn't say that. He says, do not tremble or be dismayed, for the Lord your God is with you wherever you go. It is not a matter of, don't be afraid because there's a better way. Don't be afraid because I, your Father, the Heavenly Father, is with You. For us, a life of consecration is a life of service.

While we manage our physical circumstances, we do so with the understanding that we're called to give. We're called to extend ourselves, to engage in any part of the work of the gospel that we determine to be open up as an opportunity for us. Don't be afraid. Fear not. I know this is Jesus speaking.

I know you feel fear, but you don't have to see. Jesus knew how daunting this can be, and he prepared his disciples to do the work through God's spirit as they were sent forth in Matthew chapter 10. He's gathering the 70 to send them out to preach, and this is a landmark experience. They have never done this before.

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They're going out without him. He's going to grant them the ability to perform miracles. He's sending them out two by two. This has never happened before. So in getting them ready, he tells them, fear not.

Three times. This is engagement in the work of consecration. Let's hear what he talks about and how Jesus takes the fear and says, I know it's there, but you don't need to dwell on it. Instead, move forward. Matthew 10:24 31 A disciple, Jesus is telling them, now, this is what you're going to come across.

A disciple is not above his teacher, nor a slave above his master. It is enough for the disciple that he become like the teacher and the slave like his master. If they have called the head of the house Beelzebub, how much more will they malign the members of his household? Well, that's exciting. Who wants to line up for that?

And he's saying, go out, do the work, and he said, yes, that's the way you'll be pointed out as, and what does he say next? Therefore, don't be afraid. Fear not.

Don't fear them. For there is nothing concealed that will not be revealed or hidden, that will not be known. What does he mean? He's saying, whatever happens here and now is a moment. You are about the work of the Heavenly Father.

So what if they call you sons of the devil? So what? You are about something bigger. Your mission is bigger than you. He continues in verse 27, what I tell you in darkness, speak in the light.

And whatever you hear whispered in your ear, proclaim upon the mountaintops, on the housetops, make sure that you are willing to spread the news that I'm giving you to spread, and then he says it again in verse 28, do not fear. Fear not. It gets more serious. Fear not those who kill the body but are unable to kill the soul, but rather fear him who's able to destroy both body and soul in Gehenna.

You mean we could die for this? Yep. Do you feel afraid? Most likely. Do you need to feel afraid?

No. Why? Because the work that you're called to is bigger than you. You're not supposed to understand it. You're supposed to engage in it and walk by faith, day by day, step by step.

And even if they come and drag you off like they did Stephen, you don't be afraid because they can't take your eternal life. They can't. It is out of their reach. Jesus goes further. Are not two sparrows sold for a cent?

And yet not one of them will fall to the ground apart from the Father. But the very hairs of your head are all numbered. So again, fear not. You're more valuable than many sparrows. If God Almighty can watch and oversee all of the events of the world and have them work within the context of his providence, what makes us think for a millisecond that he won't pay special attention to those who are called according to his purpose, those who are given his spirit?

You don't have to be afraid. Now, look, we feel the fear, but Jesus is saying, it's okay. You just don't have to be afraid because you are in the hands of your Father. The work of consecration is a work of service that requires engagement for the Lord by applying the truth along with the brethren. Just because we might be working on a mission that we believe we were sent to accomplish doesn't mean it will go well or go smoothly or even achieve the results we might expect.

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Trust me, I know. Fear not. You don't have to be afraid. But what if I stumbled? What if I didn't do things perfectly okay?

You don't have to be afraid. We ask for forgiveness, we step up and we take the next step. You simply need to know that your Father has all the details and your efforts securely in his hands.

So we've got the engagement in the life of consecration, the engagement in the work of the Gospel for the Lord, the truth, and the brethren. The fourth point, the hard testings. As we continue our consecrated walk, we'll undoubtedly come upon difficult trials. These trials are hard on purpose. For learning to be like Jesus doesn't happen on a bed of roses.

Oh, no. With these challenges come promises of deliverance, and we're all familiar with First Corinthians 10:13. No temptation or no testing has overtaken you. But such as is common to man and God is faithful.

God is faithful. God is faithful. He will not allow you to be tempted beyond. You are able, but will with that temptation, with that test, provide a way of escape so that you will be able to. The word here for endure literally means to bear up from underneath so you'll be able to hold up the weight of this experience.

The promise is for strength and fortitude to endure all the way through the experience. Not around it, not be delivered out of it, but through it. Let's go to Jesus example. It was night. The apostles were in a boat without Jesus.

And the winds and the waves were battering that boat, and they fought to keep things stable, and then, lo and behold, Jesus shows up walking on the water. We're going to be reading from Matthew 14:24 to 29. But the boat was already a long distance from the land, being battered by waves till the wind was contrary.

And in the fourth watch, from maybe 3am to 6am in the fourth watch of the night, he came to them walking on the sea, and when the disciples saw him walking on the sea, they were terrified. That's a terrifying thing. You're working your tail off to keep from sinking, and suddenly this person is walking up. Can't be.

It's a ghost. It's an aversion. Don't know what it is, but it is scary, and they cried out in fear.

And the next verse says, but immediately Jesus spoke to them, saying, take courage. It is I fear not. Do not be afraid. I know you feel afraid. I can see why you feel afraid.

This is not something you would have expected to have happened. But you don't have to worry because I am here, and Peter said to him, lord, if it's you, command me to walk out on the water, and he said, come, and Peter got out of the boat and he walked on the water.

We won't go any further. He sunk, we know that. But he had the faith to get out of the boat and do something that no man had ever done except for Jesus. The trying experiences of a consecrated life can draw our attention, and our survival efforts merely are trying to find balance.

You're rowing and it feels like you can't keep it going. These are the hard trials of life, and it's dark and you don't know where shore is anymore, and you're just trying to stay alive, and then this happens.

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You have something and you know what it is. Sometimes in the deepest, darkest, most difficult trials, the deliverance may come in an unexpected way, and the bottom line is you don't have to be afraid because Jesus is there and he said, it's me. Take courage, and essentially he was saying, I've got this.

So with your trials, he's got this, and he may figuratively walk on the water to you in the midst of those trials in a very fearful experience and create even more fear, and then you watch as the Providence slowly unfolds.

Fear not in those hard testings. The fifth point, we go from the hard, hard trials to the overwhelming blessings now mixed in with our fear. Fear filled and difficult trials will come. Blessings, and I'm not talking about, in this case, the many wonderful little things that come before us and encourage us day by day.

Make no mistake, those are wonderful, those are big, those are powerful, those are inspirational. But I'm talking about those things that leave us speechless in wonderment at the glory of God and is granting us a part of his glorious plan, and I just want to put in a plug because Brother Harry, I think, is going to touch on that in some ways. In his discourse we talked First Corinthians 2, 9. But as is written, eye hath not seen nor ear heard, neither has entered into the heart of man the things which God hath prepared for them that love them.

Do you understand what that means? It means you can't comprehend the magnitude of what the Heavenly Father has prepared for you and how he's doing it in your life. That's glorious. Let's go to a fearful experience in the midst of the greatest blessings ever. Like, wait, how can that be?

Here we go. Jesus brought Peter, James and John up to the Mount of Transfiguration. They had no idea what they were, what they were in for, no idea. What began as a terrifying experience became a blessing beyond their comprehension. In Matthew 17, 5, 7, they're seeing the vision, and this is overwhelming.

And it says, while he was still speaking, a bright cloud overshadowed them, and behold, a voice out of the cloud, this booming voice that said, this is my beloved Son, with whom I am well pleased. Listen to him, and when the disciples heard this, they fell face down to the ground and were terrified. What is happening beyond their expectation?

And the next verse says, and Jesus came. Jesus came to them, and what did he do? He touched them. He basically said, I'm here just by the touch, that little touch.

He touched them and he said, get up. Do not be afraid. I know you're trembling. I know you're afraid, but you don't have to be because I'm here. So in that overwhelming blessing, which was too big for them at the moment.

What it showed them was the presence of Jesus with them in spite of all of the miraculous things that they were seeing in that experience. Sometimes we are awestruck at what we're privileged to see, whether it be in the Lord's seemingly miraculous deliverance or breathtaking fulfillment of prophecy, or a stark clarity of God's plan unfolding. In all cases, we glimpse the power of God and we're told, fear not. You don't have to be afraid. I know you feel afraid, but you don't have to be.

Stand up and honor the power of God in your daily life and absorb the power of such blessing. Sixth point, the maturing process. Okay, so we went from the call to consecration to answering to

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the engagement, to working in the service. We went through the trials and the blessings, and now we're looking at the maturing process. Growing up in Christ.

Growing in Christ so Christ can be in us brings a spiritual maturity that is very, very different than anything we could have ever experienced outside of this calling. Over time, the maturity that comes as a result of this sanctifying process actually changes who we are. It changes you from the inside out. Philippians 4, 6, 7. Be anxious for nothing, but in everything, by prayer and supplication, with thanksgiving, let your requests be made known to God.

And the peace of God, which surpasses all comprehension, will guard your hearts and minds in Christ Jesus. That's a promise. Fear not having this peace doesn't mean we don't feel fear, but it does mean that our fears can be dissolved into spiritually driven actions. Jesus example. Jesus had been raised.

He had been resurrected from the dead, and he appeared to the women who went to the tomb who were already in awe, struck and bewildered. They had been given a message by angels as to what to do, and they were on their way to accomplish it. These women were on their way to do what an angel told them to do because they saw an empty tomb where they didn't expect it, and by the way, the angel said, fear not. There's a whole different level of fear nots outside of the words of Jesus.

That's another discourse, and so Jesus in Matthew 28:10, these women are leaving the tomb to go on their mission, and they see him, they see the risen Lord, and Jesus said to them, well, I don't have to tell you. You can tell me, right?

Fear not, and then he simply says, go take the word to my brethren to leave for Galilee. There they will see me. So they're on this mission, and he says, you don't have to be afraid, they are petrified.

But he said, it's okay. I know that's how you feel, but you don't have to be. You've got something you need to do. These women were carrying the details of the miraculous message of the unfolding of the Gospel, and were also tasked with carrying the details of present truth, and in some ways it can be a fear inducing responsibility.

Think about it, why me? How do I know if, what if? But what happens when you can have all of those questions? Jesus response to us is as simple as it was to those women now, those faithful women now fear not, you don't need to be afraid. Carry what I've given you and follow me and I will show you the way.

They're a picture of the maturity of our Christianity in doing something very, very special and responsible, especially at this end of the age. The seventh and final point, the crystallized character. Following Jesus on this path of self sacrifice according to the leadings of the Spirit is the end result goal of our consecrated walk. That's what it's, it's having that crystallized character. We are to walk this way until there are no steps left for us to take.

In Romans 8, 31, 32, it says, what shall we say then to these things? If God is for us, who can be against us? He who did not spare his own son, but delivered him over for us all, how will he not also with him freely give us all things? Anything and everything you need, you need will be supplied.

The path to Christ likeness is laden with all that we need to keep walking. For God of all things, calls us to this journey because he knows we can accomplish it. So our final example of Jesus

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saying, fear not now look, he's already raised right. Okay, so where do we go from here? Well, there's one more.

There's one more with the Apostle Paul. Even though the apostle Paul became the 12th apostle long after Jesus took his position at the right hand of God's power, he also had the same personal privilege of being told to fear not, and that just tells us that everyone who was called to follow him has exactly the same privilege. We are told by him, you don't need to be afraid. This is when Paul was in an exceptionally wicked city of Corinth and he needed encouragement.

And here's what happens. In Acts 18, 8, 11, it says, Crispus, the leader of the synagogue, believed in the Lord with all his household, and many of the Corinthians, when they heard, were believing and being baptized, and the Lord said, To Paul in a night vision, what did he say? Fear not.

You don't need to be afraid. You're afraid right now because this is a bad place. But I am telling you, you don't need to be afraid. But go on speaking and do not be silent, for I am with you, and no man will attack you in order to harm you. Fear, for I have many people in this city.

Fear not, because you have work to do, and I'm with you through that work, and what happened as a result of that? The next verse says, and he, the apostle Paul settled there for a year and six months into that place that was so fearful he settled there, and the place where that made him fear and did great works in the sight of God, teaching the word of God among them. Paul's message was clear. Do the work where and how you have been given this opportunity.

As our lives unfold, brethren, our mission doesn't change. It's the same. Jesus said, follow me, and he meant it. When faced with harsh conditions in our lives, our natural reactions can cause us to pause. But we've been plainly told, fear not.

You don't have to be afraid. I know you feel fear, but you don't have to live in it because you are doing my work.

In conclusion, in Colossians 3:12, 17. Now these are not fear not texts. What they are is application. Scriptures, Colossians 3, 12, 17. So as those who have been chosen of God, holy and beloved, put on a heart of compassion, kindness, humility, gentleness and patience, bearing with one another and forgiving each other.

Whoever has a complaint against anyone, just as the Lord forgave you, so also should you. It begins by saying, put on a heart of compassion. Take who you are and put something else on so you can act accordingly. Verse 14. Beyond this, put on again put on love, which is the perfect bond of unity.

Why do you put on love? Because perfect love casts out fear. You don't need to be afraid. Put on love, and then verse 15, let so when we do our work, then we have to let the peace of Christ rule in our hearts.

We've made room. Now it comes to us, to which indeed you were called in one body, and be thankful. Selfless love opens the door, opens a dwelling place for the peace of Christ, and verse 16, Let once you've got the peace of Christ, now it's let the word of Christ richly dwell within you. See, fear messes all of that up.

But if we can follow the process, then we can let the word of Christ richly dwell within us. With all wisdom, teaching and admonishing one to another, with psalms and hymns and spiritual songs,

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singing with thankfulness in our hearts, and then verse 17 whatever you do in word or deed, Whatever you do in word or deed, do all in the name of the Lord Jesus, giving thanks through him to God the Father. Do it all in his name. That's what you're called to stand for.

We end where we began. Luke 12:32 Fear not, little flock, I know you're afraid, but you don't need to be, for it's your Father's good pleasure to give you the kingdom.