

**SERMON DELIVERED AT LAY-
MEN'S MISSIONARY CON-
VENTION**

Berlin, Dec. 10th, 1915.

Text: St. Luke 12, 32: Fear not, little flock; for it is your Father's good pleasure to give you the kingdom.

After extending greetings to the laymen assembled on behalf of St. Matthew's congregation and bidding them welcome, the speaker dwelled briefly on the depressing conditions under which the Lutheran Church has to labour in these troubled times. Whither should we turn for comfort and encouragement but to Him Who is abundantly able to revive our fainting souls. Our text is one of the most beautiful consolations given us by the love and faithful witness, whose word cannot fail and whose promises must surely be fulfilled. He directs our hearts and minds from the warring kingdoms of this world to the everlasting kingdom of God, our heavenly Father, and dispells all fears, whether we shall prevail and gain the victory in life's sore struggles and finally succeed to press into the kingdom of glory. There are two leading thoughts in the text:

1. We are helpless when we look upon ourselves.
2. We need not fear while we trust in the Lord.

I.

By comparing the Christians to a flock of sheep the Lord wants to indicate that they are not only inoffensive but really defenseless creatures. What the Bible praises in the children of God is their humility, lowliness, patience, contentment and submissiveness. They are the "quick in the land," overcoming the world rather by patience and prayer than by wisdom, wealth and power. Of these weak and timid sheep there is only a little flock. The Church of Jesus is not large. If numbers count, she does not amount to much. Many are called, few are chosen. When the deluge came, only eight were saved. When Sodom was destroyed, not more than three escaped. Jesus succeeded to attract but 70 disciples. 5,000 were converted at Jerusalem, among all the millions of unbelievers only a drop of water in an ocean, a grain of sand in the boundless desert. To-day not even the third part of mankind has been brought to the knowledge of Christ after 1900 years of missionary efforts, and if we would subtract all those who are only Christians by

name, the hypocrites, time-servers and turncoats, this number would still melt down and dwindle away. It is a little flock.

And this little flock of timid sheep has to face great struggles, tribulations and persecutions. Jesus said to his disciples: "Behold, I send you forth as sheep in the midst of wolves." Public opinion, the spirit of the age, are hostile to true Christianity, and whenever any movement begins to become really popular we do well to watch it with suspicion. Thus the little flock of Jesus' sheep stands defenselessly in the midst of suspicious wolves who threaten to devour it.

II.

Nevertheless we need not despair, if only we put our confidence in the Lord. It is He, Who says in our text: "Fear not, little flock." What a comforting word coming from His lips! Even if we believe not, yet He abideth faithful, He cannot deny Himself. He will never leave thee nor forsake thee.

It is your Father's good pleasure to give you the kingdom. That means: it is His firm almighty will and purpose. Who can overthrow it? He made up His mind before the foundation of the world and now it stands for all eternity. Satan, world and flesh cannot frustrate His will nor bring His purpose to naught for "His is the kingdom and the power and the glory for ever and ever."

Yea more: it is His good and gracious will to give us the kingdom. Our Father's good pleasure. He could not be happy without making us happy. That we were born in a Christian country, that we had parents and teachers who taught us the way of life, that all our own attempts to work out our salvation failed and we had to acknowledge that "the race is not to the swift nor the battle to the strong," that at last we found Christ and in Him forgiveness of sins, life and salvation, what does all this prove but that it is our Father's good pleasure to give us the kingdom.

Of course this good pleasure is not mere arbitrariness. It is Jesus Who says, addressing His disciples: "Fear not little flock, it is your Father's good pleasure to give you the kingdom." If it were not for Jesus we would not enjoy the heavenly Father's good pleasure, but for His sake the kingdom has been allotted to us Who are His disciples through faith.

With this consolation let us enter upon our work. We are troubled on

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