

When Anxiety Met Its Match

✦ **Caught in the Word** (vv.23-24)

✦ **Relieved by the Spirit** (vv.25-27)

✦ **Shielded by faith** (vv.28-29)

In the Name of Jesus, who brings us God's peace, dear fellow servants of God's truth:

Sometimes when Jesus' disciples ask a question, it may seem He doesn't answer. But Jesus is the Master Teacher. Learning from Him is like climbing a mountain. You wonder what's over the next rise as you struggle up with God's help. Over the top Jesus spreads before us an entire mountain meadow of fragrant flowers and bees buzzing in the sunshine. We expected another rock or hard place. But God's grace is leading us to heaven, with plenty of refreshment along the way.

So in the upper room on Command (Maundy) Thursday, Judas [not Iscariot] had just asked, "**Lord, why do you intend to show yourself to us and not to the world?**" Jesus both answers his question and spreads a entire mesa of blessings in front of them and us – another time **When Anxiety Met Its Match**.

✦ **Caught in the Word** (vv.23-24)

Everything revolves around your attitude toward God's Word. Did you catch where Jesus got His teaching? *Jesus replied, "If anyone loves me, he will obey my teaching. My Father will love him, and we will come to him and make our home with him. He who does not love me will not obey my teaching. These words you hear are not my own; they belong to the Father who sent me."* Part of our problem with attitude stems from cloudy English. Some translators render "*obey*," when the Holy Spirit's Greek original is **τηρέω**, literally *guard and treasure*, a concept running throughout the Bible. In the Third Commandment it's not just, "**Be careful to remember the Sabbath day, to keep it holy**" (Deuteronomy 5:12 HCSB), but more literally, "**Guard the Sabbath Day for it is holy.**" When you *guard and treasure* God's Word, you can't listen to preachers who distort it or ignore parts of it that make people uncomfortable. As Paul predicted by the Holy Spirit: "**For the time will come when men will not put up with sound doctrine. Instead, to suit their own desires, they will gather around them a great number of teachers to say what their itching ears want to hear.**" (2 Timothy 4:3 NIV84) But we're **Caught in the Word**.

When my kids were little, Jesus came to live in our home as **the Word** of God. One Monday evening when Joel our oldest was about four, I got two phone calls from the only two volunteers our "New Mode" Mission had at the time. Both quit for personal reasons. Nearly in tears, I was trying to help Joel brush his teeth. Then I heard his little voice through the fog of my distress, "Dad, when you're sad, I feel sad." "Joel," I answered, "That almost makes it worth going through this." **Caught in the Word**, I had accepted this Divine Call and was carrying my cross. **Anxiety Met Its Match** from my Savior living in my Son through Baptism. **Caught in the Word**, my little boy showed how we are...

✦ **Relieved by the Spirit** (vv.25-27)

If you want your life to have meaning, if you're really serious about helping people and making life better for those around you, these words of Jesus will lift you up again and again. They're worth the effort to memorize so you can carry them like nuclear power down deep in your heart and soul. "**But the Counselor, the Holy Spirit, whom the Father will send in my name, will teach you all things and will remind you of everything I have said to you. Peace I leave with you; my peace I give you. I do not give to you as the world gives. Do not let your hearts be troubled and do not be afraid.**"

That explains how the Apostle John could remember Jesus' exact words decades later. Along with telling and retelling them to countless congregations, the only surviving elder disciple of our Lord also had direct inspiration. Jesus had promised the Holy Spirit, the *Paraclete*. We translate *Counselor* or *Comforter*, the divine Friend who stands beside you, puts an arm across your shoulders, listens and cares, but even better counsels and advises what to do and how to do it in God's **Word**, e.g., Proverbs. You find your **Anxiety Met Its Match** because by the powerful Word of God you are **Relieved by the Spirit**.

This week a brother in Christ emailed me, along with the words of his prayer for me, some of my favorite passages including: *"So do not fear, for I am with you; do not be dismayed, for I am your God. I will strengthen you and help you; I will uphold you with my righteous right hand."* *"For I know the plans I have for you," declares the LORD, "plans to prosper you and not to harm you, plans to give you hope and a future."* (Isaiah 41:10; Jeremiah 29:11; NIV 1984) Why did my brother send such a priceless gift? Because when he asked how I was doing, I told him honestly that I was praying for God's help. *"Confess your faults to each other and pray for each other so that you may be healed. The prayer of a righteous man is powerful and effective."* (James 5:16) **Anxiety Met Its Match** again in prayer.

That 1987 weekend when there was no congregation meeting yet even in Snail Lake School, my Lord Jesus had a better plan. Sunday was Mission Festival at Cross Lutheran, Rockford, MN. During my presentation after dinner, I shared how 100% of our mission volunteers had left. The next issue of our prospect newsletter, *New Life Line*, was in boxes with labels in need of willing hands. God turned two volunteers into many eager hands, honored that God would let them be part of His mission. Pray for our Church Family Leaders that when they call members for help, then our Lord Jesus who built New Life by His Word will give willing and eager voices saying, "Yes!" For in our personal lives too, we are...

✠ **Shielded by faith** (vv.28-29)

Sometimes we are separated from those we love. Jesus said it would be so for His disciples: *"You heard me say, 'I am going away and I am coming back to you.' If you loved me, you would be glad that I am going to the Father, for the Father is greater than I. I have told you now before it happens, so that when it does happen you will believe."* Jesus also said: *"I tell you the truth: It is for your good that I am going away. Unless I go away, the Counselor will not come to you; but if I go, I will send him to you."* (16:7 NIV84) *When earthly friends forsake me quite, And I have neither skill nor might, He's sure my helper to appear. His loving kindness, oh, how near!* (TLH 340:6)

Joshua, the LORD's deliverer who conquered the Promised Land, knew how **Anxiety Met Its Match**. He was **Shielded by faith** through this same Word of God, another passage emailed me this week: *"Have I not commanded you? Be strong and courageous. Do not be terrified; do not be discouraged, for the LORD your God will be with you wherever you go."* (Joshua 1:9)

So I could tell you the rest of the story, how that young volunteer who struggled with rejection on evangelism calls expressed his thanks for our 25th Anniversary. Or when it rains you could just look up in our classrooms and fellowship hall for the roof shielding you. Then think how God brought dear Dorothy Lindig back to New Life. Her estate built most of our education wing.

But **Shielded by faith**, I'd rather end with this. When you feel as if your life is an uphill battle, friends trembling all around you, enemies taunting you from up on top, remember Jonathan and his armor-bearer. Where you live and work, you're surrounded by modern day Philistines who hate God and His people. They want all the wealth and technology for themselves, just as the Philistines made sure no one but Saul and Jonathan even had swords. But Jonathan told his armor-bearer he wanted to attack because of this shielding Word: *"Nothing can hinder the Lord from saving, whether by many or by few."* (1 Samuel 14:6 NIV84) Thanks to Jesus' resurrection, we also *"through faith are shielded by God's power until the coming of the salvation that is ready to be revealed in the last time."* (1 Peter 1:5 NIV84) **Anxiety Met Its Match** in Christ alone. Amen.