



Have no fear

Janice Scott *reflects on* Matthew 10:24-39

Fear is a huge barrier to human fulfilment, so Jesus tackles the stifling effect of fear. After empowerment to heal the sick, cast out demons and preach about the kingdom of God, come warnings interlaced with encouragement and support.

Jesus tells the disciples what to expect. If he is maligned, they will be too. Powerful people may hurt them

and ultimately threaten death, but even that is not to be feared, for no one can harm the soul.

The disciples are completely vulnerable. They may not take anything with them – no money, no clothes, not even a stick to help them along. In their vulnerability they must rely entirely upon God and openly preach the Gospel. In so doing they will force dark

secrets into the light, for living and proclaiming the Gospel will defeat any worldly power.

This is dangerous work which may result in conflict in their own families, but there is still no need for fear because they are so precious to God. They must conquer their fear and complete the mission by siding with the

disadvantaged. Only non-Romans were crucified, so crucifixion separated those who belonged and those who did not. Jesus uses the image of crucifixion to exhort the disciples to take up their own crosses. In other words, to care for those who do not belong. We too must support those on society's margins. ☺

God of the marginalised, we fear so much – failure, poor health, lack of money, rejection. Help us so to conquer our fears that we too can take up our cross and demonstrate the healing power of your Gospel. Amen.

Books of the Old Testament

Psalms

by Trevor Dennis

Strangely, the Church largely ignores the two kinds of prayer which many of the psalms express so powerfully – lament and complaint. They speak of the devastating consequences of illness, persecution, betrayal, violence, war, drought; they talk of loneliness, powerlessness, despair. In these psalms we hear the clear voices of the distressed. We hear the bewilderment and anger of those who feel abandoned by God: "My God, my God, why have you

forsaken me?" (22:1); "Why do you sleep, O Lord?" (44:23); "Has God forgotten to be gracious?" (77:9). This is so much more honest than the prayers we are used to in public worship, so much more inclusive. We pray for those in distress as if they aren't there, and usually they aren't, for the Church gives them no voice. But the psalms do. And they offer such comfort: God collects our tears in a bottle, (56:8), lights our lamp (18:28), or (in several psalms) hides us in the shadow of her wings (where the image is of God as a mother bird brooding her young). ☺

Mere Christianity, by C. S. Lewis

by Jane Williams

Jane Williams continues her series about this great Christian classic.

Lewis spent many years fighting against belief in God, and he draws on the arguments he used to make against the existence of God in *Mere Christianity*. The most important is the problem of why a good God could make a world in which there is so much evil and pain. But while Lewis once scoffed at Christian claims about God, he was aware of a break in his own logic. Where does the notion of "bad" come

from unless there is, deep in us, a belief in "goodness"? He writes: "A man does not call a line crooked unless he has some idea of a straight line."

So we have a universe that has much evil and meaninglessness, but also within it people who are aware of evil and meaninglessness. Lewis concludes that there are only two explanations: either Christianity or dualism. Dualism believes that good and evil are equal and eternal powers. But the very fact that we call them "good" and "evil" means that we know they are not equal. That means that only Christianity really makes sense. ☺

“The Son of God became a man to enable men to become sons of God.”

C. S. Lewis (1898-1963), writer and theologian