

Grace and peace are your dear friends in Christ from God our Father and our Lord and Saviour, Jesus Christ. Amen.

Our Scripture readings today continue to reveal the story of hope in the world and the promise from God that the structures of all that harms the relationship between God and His people will fall like 'buildings being toppled'. Our gospel text is a final reflection, view, and image of the mighty Jerusalem, its buildings and the great temple that resides at the very heart of the city. Any city, when well cared for is beautiful, and Jerusalem is no different. This is the apex of their very traditions and existence; and the city must have been a beautiful sight to behold.

Jesus acknowledges what the human eye sees as 'great buildings', but explains that nothing visible will remain and all will be thrown down. Amid in this prophecy of destruction, we remember the comforting words of Christ and hear the phrase; fear not.

The reading from Daniel is also prophetic and alarming with more destruction, anguish, and judgment. Daniel's words are referring to 'an end', which creates a sense of uneasiness as we both question and consider if we have prepared...or are prepared. We hear the words again; fear not.

The Psalmist identifies the common thread between the two messages in the context of 'fear not' in that God will 'take care' and provide for His people. But a stern warning is issued to those who have turned away from God for the sake of other gods. When the Lord is your God, "fear not", for that which could harm you has already been 'thrown down'.

My friends, we go through life, one day at a time, and give thanks for the strength, endurance, and support we have been provided at the end of the day. We face days that are beautiful gifts, days that are difficult, and still, we face days that are full of [what we believe to be] nothing but fear, concern, uncertainty, and hurt. I am not sure if anyone will ever complete his or her life on earth without experiencing strife to some significant degree.

A time of anguish can come on gradually or instantly and it will do everything possible to 'throw us down' from a place of comfort and happiness among our friends and neighbors. We might hear the words, 'fear not' from friends who offer their help; we might recall the words, 'fear not' from previous challenges we have faced; we might even find the courage to say the words, 'fear not' to help others; but the strength to overcome is not our own, but from a gracious Lord who has thrown-down those who attempt any harm to us.

I shared with you last week, if a miracle were printed in the newspaper, would we believe it or would we analyze it to the point where we failed to see God's handiwork, mercy, and direct action? Well, the jar is not empty, the jug has not failed and our Lord continues to provide. The story of God's miracle in our very midst and community was published on Wednesday night and delivered to me (and all of GPD). I asked (and received permission) to share the following.

Sergeant Bill White is currently suffering with stage-four cancer and receives treatments to extend his life. GPD, like all Police organizations, rally around their sick and injured family

members to provide them care and support as long as it is needed. Their commitment and compassion is literally, unending. Bill's cancer has reached a point where something 'more' needed to be done. An announcement to the department was scheduled when the death of Officer Jared Franks occurred.

In a moment, GPD was engaged with two family issues requiring their compassion, resources, understanding, prayers, and support. Just when they were about to reach the extent of their resources; neither the jar nor the jug failed. My dear friends, God provided. In a moment of human weakness, despair, and devastation, our Lord shines through with a meal to provide new life to an organization that depends upon the support, prayers, understanding of their own family and the community they serve for their very strength to endure.

The announcement of Sergeant Bill White was postponed, but now able to be presented in a new context. What started as a call of support for a family member will now become a miracle of strength displayed by the members of a family. The family of Fallen Officer Jared Franks made a request, in their darkest hour, that in lieu of flowers for their beloved, they asked for donations be made to The Bill and Melissa White Fund. A Fallen Officer will receive national attention. The outpouring of support for the Family of Office Franks has now extended care and compassion friend and family member in need as well.

My friends, this is the miracle that God is active among us, providing for us, sustaining us, and ensuring that the jar does not become empty and the jug does not fail! Even in complete and total anguish, defeat, pain, and suffering, God has lifted up a family so they could in turn lift up another. When God lifts us up, He also throws down the doubt, discouragement, and darkness that attempt to surround us. God reminds us that we are united in a kingdom that belongs to Him in this place, here and now. We will not be abandoned, we will not be thrown-down, we will not be ignored because God is here within and among us; every day.

We are God's own and God has lifted us up to a holy place above all that has been cast down. God established a kingdom here within and among us where we should awake each day with the expectation to see, hear, feel, and experience our Lord working in the world; witnessing miracles, sharing hopes, and proclaiming the love of God for the world.

He has thrown down all principalities, powers, authorities, and dominions and made them a footstool so nothing will ever come between us and His love through Jesus Christ our Lord. Fear not for God is with you and provides you with the peace that passes all understanding to keep your hearts and minds through Jesus Christ our Lord. Amen