



December, 2009 Pastor Randy Richards

Sunday School 9:45 ~ Worship Service 11:00

A Note from Our Pastor:

"Fear not! Do not be afraid!" The angel spoke these words to Zachariah, to Mary, to Joseph, and finally to a group of shepherds on a hillside near Bethlehem. Don't be afraid. Fear has a way of cringing our stomachs up in knots, crippling our thinking, and creating panic. Fear and worry can dominate our hearts when we see ourselves caught in a whirlwind of disasters beyond our control. Fear drives us downward. During this past year, the entire world has been caught in the grip of an economic down-spiral. Houses have been foreclosed on. People have lost jobs. Businesses have closed. I could go on and on. More and more you see a kind of bleak fear in people's eyes. Will I lose my house? My job? How will I feed my family? These are all valid concerns that many have either experienced or at least know those who have had many of these same fears. May we be reminded of the words which Franklin Delano Roosevelt spoke to a nation at the depth of the Great Depression: "Let me assert my firm belief that the only thing we have to fear is fear itself -- nameless, unreasoning, unjustified terror which paralyzes needed efforts to convert retreat into advance." Fear can grip us and choke all faith out of our hearts. Fear also drives economic depression. Fear causes companies to down size and people to stop buying. It causes runs on banks and panic on Wall Street. FDR reminded a nation that fear itself constitutes a large part of the problems we face. It was as true in 1933 as it was on the first Christmas. On that first Christmas, the world was in desperate times, too. A census is being conducted in order to raise already high taxes. Herod the Great is king of the Jews. Inside a stable in the town sit a poor carpenter and his young wife -- far from home. She is in labor. Her child will be born and placed in a manger of all places. Why is it like this? She may have asked. And then she recalls an echo of the angel's words to her, "Do not be afraid, Mary...." And a Savior Is Born! On the outskirts of town, shepherds are huddling, too. All of a sudden the sky lights up and an angel proclaims: "Fear not: for, behold, I bring you good tidings of great joy, which shall be to all people. For unto you is born this day in the city of David a Saviour, which is Christ the Lord." (Luke 2:10, 11) The shepherds' fear is turned to joy as they hear news that a Savior is born. And so they run into the town and hurry from stable to stable until they find the Child in the manger, just as they have been told. Tucked in that manger, wrapped in swaddling clothes is the Savior himself. A Saviour comes to rescue people in danger, preserve those who are threatened by harm, and protect his people from the troubles that surround them. That's what saviours do! And that's exactly what Jesus came to do for us. So, do not be afraid. God has sent a Saviour to us -- Jesus Christ the Lord. He is the One who will never leave us or forsake us. He will supply all our needs according to his riches in glory. He will give unto us all the things we need when we seek him. Christmas is about a Saviour whom our world doesn't really even know. They think that Christmas is about gifts under a tree and a spirit of good cheer, with Christmas dinner and family around the table. But as good as all that may be, it isn't nearly as good as the Real Christmas. The Real Christmas message is this: God has sent a Saviour for you to save you from your sins and to help you in this life -- to lift your burdens and ease your fears. That's it! A Savior who is Christ the *Lord* -- God himself! The world is gripped by fear. But fear's hold has been broken in those of us who believe the angel's words: "Fear not ... for a Saviour is born unto you -- Christ the Lord!" May God give each of you a very blessed and Merry Christmas which can be free from fear with Jesus in our hearts!

***In God's Love,
Randy***