



Wednesday Prayer

9th Sunday after Pentecost – Have no fear, little flock

“Do not be afraid, little flock, for it is your Father’s good pleasure to give you the kingdom. Sell your possessions, and give alms. Make purses for yourselves that do not wear out, an unfailing treasure in heaven, where no thief comes near and no moth destroys. For where your treasure is, there your heart will be also. “Be dressed for action and have your lamps lit; be like those who are waiting for their master to return from the wedding banquet, so that they may open the door for him as soon as he comes and knocks.

Luke 12:32-35

Beloved songs I remember from childhood come to mind while reading this Gospel. *“Have no fear, little flock”* (ELW764) and *“Keep Your Lamp Trimmed and Burning”* by Blind Willie Johnson (1928) bring me to a place of simple childhood ease, attending church as a family with my Dad up front preaching. I had nothing really to fear, and I had no idea of the origins of a song written in 1928 by a gospel blues singer, songwriter and evangelist. In fact, I’ve just read a bit about Blind Willie, learning he was born in 1897 to a Texas sharecropper, was most likely blinded by his stepmother when he was 11 years old, and blues historians describe his music as melancholy, violent, impassioned, remarkable, wide-ranging. What do I know of fear and being ready? Looking at the titles of his other songs, seems Blind Willie knew a lot.

Back to the hymn “Have no fear, little flock” and many of us may envision Jesus as gentle shepherd protecting us. We are to be given the kingdom! Although we may wish to skip over that part about selling everything or giving it to those in need in order to be ready. In the work I do now with Cherish All Children, this hymn brings up new thoughts – how can I casually sing “have no fear” knowing there are children and youth fearing daily what they must do to survive? How can I “be dressed for action” and have my lamps lit, ready to open the door to give myself to the mission of preventing the sexual exploitation of those who are vulnerable?

Blind Willie Johnson wrote and sang about staying ready, keeping our lamps trimmed and burning, not growing weary “til our work is done. *“For the time is drawing nigh.”* Many of us are weary, and yet we know God is there for us, to heal us, uplift and restore us. We keep doing the work to share what has been given to us, and to hold others in the protecting love of Christ.

Tender and loving God, we’re often consumed by our own fears and our own treasures that we neglect what you have given us. May we live unafraid and awaken to the needs of our neighbors, working to overturn systems and structures that harm your beloved children. May we share your protecting love in all our actions. Amen.

Written by Joy McElroy, Cherish All Children Executive Director.