

# Fear Not – An Encouragement in Our Current Times



When we read Acts, it is easy to see the church as a growing, vibrant phenomenon that was impacting the known world. And it was.

When we look at the world today, it is easy to think of ourselves as a declining group, who are one voice amongst many.

Is the church losing her relevance? Does she matter? How do we navigate the cultural changes that exist today?

In truth, the Christian church is growing worldwide, just as it did back in the days of the early church.

God is not surprised by any of the things we are experiencing right now. It is not new. We often think of ourselves as one small voice amongst many. This was true in the days of the early church too.

The church began very small and grew. Christianity was not the only voice that could be heard. In many places, the message was rejected. Examples of this are found throughout the gospels and the book of Acts. The early Christians were mocked, persecuted and humiliated for their faith. There were several different beliefs and secular, hedonistic lifestyles. The same is true today as it was then.


I hear people ask, 'Does the gospel have relevance today?' It certainly does. Luke 2:10: And the angel said to them, "Fear not, for behold, I bring good news of great joy that will be for all the people."

This was proclaimed by the angels to the shepherds, because a Saviour had been born to them. (2:11).

So:

Fear not: The same challenges facing us faced the early church. But God is in control. We can trust in Him and pray to Him for wisdom.

Good news: The gospel is good news. It is the story of a Holy God rescuing a people for Himself, not based on our efforts, but based on the work of His Son alone.



Great joy: When we understand this, and appreciate that Jesus + nothing = everything, it results in great joy. Our hope isn't in ourselves or our abilities. It isn't in others or their abilities. It solely rests in God. For ourselves, this can bring us peace. Striving is over. Our struggles and efforts to 'be better' are exchanged for trust in Jesus. Let him transform you. Let him renew your mind. (Romans 12:2) This brings great joy.

For all the people: It isn't a message just for us. It is a message to be shared. When you scratch beneath the surface, people have messy lives; we all have messy lives. There are things we have done, thought or said that we are not proud of. Jesus paid the price for all these things. Nothing is beyond his reach. And we are not responsible for how people respond to the gospel, but we can share the good news. Just as in the early days of the church, the message is the same: 'We are a broken people, in need of someone to rescue us.' Some will reject the message. Some will accept it. Some will accept another message. But this doesn't mean our message is lacking in relevance.

There will always be other voices. It just feels that in a social media heavy world, our voice has become small. It hasn't. We have always been one of many voices. But our confidence comes, not from our abilities, but from who Christ is. Therefore, we can afford to be kind and patient with those who don't know him. We can pray for the Holy Spirit to soften people's hearts to respond to the Father's voice. We can continue to live in hope, knowing God is in control, recognizing He is not fearful, and therefore, neither do we need to be.

Colossians 4:2-6 is a helpful encouragement. Spend time praying. Be open to opportunities and be thankful for them. Pray that God will open doors for the gospel, both for yourself and others. Pray for clarity in the message. Pray for wisdom to convey the message well, and to know when to speak, when not to speak. Consider how we can speak with gentleness and grace, yet with conversations that lead people to consider Jesus. But remember, only God can raise dead people to life.

