

# Good Shepherd Lutheran Church

Watertown, WI

**Fifth Sunday of Easter April 28, 2013**



**KEEP  
CALM  
AND  
CARRY  
ON**

## **Collect of the Day**

O God, You make the minds of Your faithful to be of one will. Grant that we may love what You have commanded and desire what You promise, that among the many changes of this world our hearts may be fixed where true joys are found; through Jesus Christ, Your Son, our Lord, who lives and reigns with You and the Holy Spirit, one God, now and forever. Amen

## **“Keep Calm and Carry On”**

Rev. David K. Groth

*“Truly, truly, I say to you, you will weep and lament, but the world will rejoice. You will be sorrowful, but your sorrow will turn into joy. When a woman is giving birth, she has sorrow because her hour has come, but when she has delivered the baby, she no longer remembers the anguish, for joy that a human being has been born into the world. So also you have sorrow now, but I will see you again and your hearts will rejoice, and no one will take your joy from you” (John 16:20-22).*

I’m sure you’ve seen the poster. It’s bright red with white writing. At the top of it is the crown of King George VI of the United Kingdom, the current queen’s father, and under that in bold white letters it reads, “Keep calm and carry on.” It was produced in 1939 by the British Ministry of Information. It was the time when German planes were flying over Great Britain every night bombing London, Coventry, Liverpool and other industrial centers. The world had never seen anything quite like it: the air raid sirens every night, citizens hiding in basements and subway stations, the unbelievable noise and explosions, fires and destruction. Understandably, the British were terrified. To make matters worse, much worse, everyone, including the British government, expected an invasion by the Nazis was imminent. To improve morale, the British government produced this poster that would be distributed in the event of invasion: Keep calm and carry on. That invasion never happened, and subsequently the posters were destroyed. I think there are just two originals still in existence. One was

found in 2009 by a used-book seller in the northern part of England. This man was rummaging through boxes, and at the bottom of one, he found this bright red poster. He took it out and liked it, so he framed it and hung it in the window of his shop. It created great interest and became something of a phenomenon. In recent years, thousands of copies of the poster have been sold. You'll find it in all different places. You'll see it on birthday cards. "Keep calm and carry on." I'm thinking I might put one up in my office. And if you have an office, it would probably work there too. And it would probably also work in your family room.

Recently, there have been many derivations of the message. There's always the crown and the white lettering, but the message has been altered. One says, "Keep calm and call mom". Another: "Keep calm and carry a big stick". One for our time: "Keep calm and consolidate all your debts into one easy monthly payment." And my favorite with the white crown and red background: "Freak out and run like heck." (That's the scrubbed up version.)

But the original message is so simple, so clear, without any spin – "Keep calm and carry on." It turns out to have meaning not just for a single people in a time of trouble, but for all of us, wherever we live, whatever our troubles. I don't mean to trivialize the very real destruction and terror and evil of the Blitz and the understandable fear of the British, but it does occur to me that we are all, in one way or another, under assault. Maybe it's at work where more is being asked of you than anyone can reasonably deliver. Maybe it's your body has served so well for so long, but now is showing signs of mutiny. Maybe for you it happens when you read the newspaper or watch the 10:00 pm evening news, which has become so grim and dark. Yes, it seems our culture is fraying, but "keep calm and carry on." Don't panic. Instead, do what you've been given to do. Stay in your vocations and be the parent God has given you to be. Be the worker, the friend, the

citizen. Be the neighbor, the servant. Be the face of Christ, the feet, the hands. “Keep calm and carry on” doing the work what God has give you to do. As Isaiah writes, “Fear not, for I have redeemed you; I have called you by name, you are mine. When you pass through the waters, I will be with you; and through the rivers, they shall not sweep over you; when you walk through the fires you shall not be burned; the flames shall not consume you. For I am the Lord your God, the Holy One of Israel, your Savior” (Is. 43:10).

Jesus has been warning his disciples about the hatred of the world. “I have chosen you out of the world” he says, “therefore the world hates you” (15:18). “If they persecuted me, they will also persecute you” he warns. A few verses later he says, “Indeed, the hour is coming when whoever kills you will think he is offering service to God.” (Isn’t that still relevant?) Now, hearing all this, don’t you think the disciples are feeling the stress and anxiety?

To make matters much worse, Jesus keeps talking about being arrested and crucified. He keeps talking about leaving them. In our text today he says, “In a little while, you will see me no longer.”

I’m told every profession has its own bad dream or nightmare which haunts them at night. I asked a couple of our teachers what their vocational nightmare is and one said, falling asleep in the middle of a class period. For ministers it has to do with preaching. You step into the pulpit and your notes are gone, or the service is starting and you’re still at home, you’re in jeans and a T-shirt. What’s your vocational nightmare?

For the disciples of Jesus, it probably had something to do with Jesus leaving them. So long as he’s close, they know they’ll be okay. He will answer the entrapping questions of the Pharisees. He will keep the devil and his demons at bay. He will heal them if they are injured or get sick. He will feed them if they really need it. But if he leaves them, they lose all that. They would be on their own. And he keeps talking

about leaving them.

In our text Jesus once again points to his arrest and crucifixion, and says to them, “A little while, and you will see me no longer.” He might also be thinking of his ascension into heaven. He tries to comfort them, promising them the guidance of the Holy Spirit. He tries to tell them their grief will not last forever. “You will weep and lament . . . you *will* be sorrowful, but your sorrow will turn into joy.” But I don’t think they really heard those words of comfort. They’re still thinking about that first part: “A little while, and you will see me no longer.” I think they’re probably suffering some sort of collective anxiety attack. They’re feeling the fear but trying not to show it. They’re wanting to panic and flee, but Jesus seems to be saying, “Keep calm and carry on.” It’s the old promise. Fear not, for you will not be left as orphans.

Theologian Walter Brueggemann says that’s the fundamental message of the Bible: “Fear not.” “Fear not” is the message to Moses in the wilderness. It’s the message also to Israel in Babylon. It’s the message of the angel to a pregnant teenager named Mary, and to startled shepherds in the field, and to the grieving women at an open tomb: “Do not be afraid.” “Keep calm. Don’t panic.” It’s the message to everyone who sits in the darkness and ponders his or her mortality, or the mortality of the one they love. “Fear not. I am with you.” “Even though I walk through the valley of the shadow of death I will fear no evil, for thou art with me.” Fear, especially the fear of death, is the great darkness, the shadow over human life. St. Paul called death the last enemy, our final enemy. And that fear sometimes runs rampant in society. That fear feeds the terrorist mindset, but also feeds toxic policies. Fear is responsible for many evils.

To believe in God, to trust in Jesus Christ, does not mean you are immune from fears. It means you need not be captive to them. It is to live in the freedom of knowing that in Jesus Christ, the ultimate issues have been resolved. God’s love has come and will come into our world and into our lives. God’s love will surround us and keep us every day of our lives right up to the last one and beyond. God’s love shines in every darkness, every shadow.

Isn't that the point of our text? "You will be sorrowful, but your sorrow will turn into joy." It's like a woman giving birth, Jesus says. The process is full of pain and anguish, but once she has delivered the baby, she doesn't think about the pain and anguish. She thinks about that newborn infant and is filled with joy. Verse 22, "So also you have sorrow now, but I will see you again and your hearts will rejoice, and no one will take your joy from you."

Author Anne Lamott tells a story about parenting her first child. Anne had taken her two-year-old son to Lake Tahoe, where they stayed in a condominium by the lake. There are a lot of gambling establishments around, so all the rooms come with light-blocking blinds so you can gamble all night and sleep all day, which to me sounds miserable, but that's not the point.

One day Anne put her baby to sleep in his Pack 'n Play in a totally darkened bedroom and went to work writing in the next room. A few moments later she heard her baby knocking on the door from inside. She got up to put him back to bed, but found the door was locked. Somehow he had managed to push the lock button on the doorknob. He was calling, "Mommy, Mommy," and she was saying, "Just jiggle the doorknob, honey, push the button again." Of course, he couldn't even see the doorknob in the darkened room. When it became clear to him that his mother couldn't open the door, he started to panic. She could hear him sobbing. She did everything she could think of: she called the rental agency, the manager, she left frantic messages on answering machines; running back to talk through the door and try to comfort her son there in the dark, locked room. But by now the boy was fairly terrified.

Finally she did the only thing she could think of, which was to lie down and slide her fingers under the door where there were a few centimeters of space. She told him over and over to do the same: to bend over and find her fingers. And somehow he did, and he quieted down.

They stayed like that for what seemed like a long time, until help came, him holding her fingers in the dark, feeling her presence, her care, her love.

Sometimes you and I are like that two-year-old in the dark, and God always is like that mother, present in the darkness.

The promise is God is faithful. God does not forget us, abandon us, ever, and therefore, finally, there is nothing to fear. “A little while, and you will see me no longer; and again a little while and you will see me.” Just a little while. Not long. Till then, “Keep Calm and Carry On.” Don’t panic and run like heck. Be still and know he is God. Stay in your vocations. Be the disciple God has called you to be, servant, the father or mother, the teacher or engineer. And be the child, the child God has called you to be.

Amen.

BUSINESS NAME  
**GOOD SHEPHERD LUTHERAN CHURCH**

[www.goodshepherd.wi.org](http://www.goodshepherd.wi.org)  
1611 East Main Street  
Watertown, WI 53094