

**Do Not Be Afraid**  
**Funeral Sermon for Angie Lica (Lisa)**  
**May 6, 2011**  
**Pastor Jason Bryan-Wegner**

Grace, mercy and peace to you from Jesus, the one who brings new life. Amen.

Sing: "Have no fear little flock, it's the father's good pleasure to give you the kingdom, have no fear, little flock."

I grew up singing this song in Sunday School. And it never fails to amaze me how often I turn back to it when faced with difficult times in life. Those times when fear can easily get the best of us, when the future is uncertain, when life is overwhelming and it seems that it would be better off to dig a hole and come out when it is all over. And there are those times that no matter how good that sounds, whatever is causing us to fear, will not go away by simply ignoring it. Don't be afraid...it's easier said than done.

At the end of Angie's life, fear was on her mind. The fear of death, the fear of missing loved ones, even a fear that God wouldn't take her. But Angie wasn't the type of person in life to be too afraid of anything. Deb and Martha described her as independent.

After graduating from high school, Angie left the little town of Rochester and embarked on an adventure in the Navy WAVES. In New York, she likely met people she never would have met back home and got to try things she'd never seen before. She would have taken home a little less than \$100 a month, which was big money back then, and in the midst of it all she was serving her country. She seemed to revel in this time in her life. She looked back on those days fondly. It had to take a good deal of confidence and a healthy independent streak to be so bold to take such a big adventure.

That independence continued in her life as Angie married and raised a family. She was known to sometimes be stubborn, which is just another way of saying she had her own independent way of seeing the world. She probably challenged each of you on occasion with her determination.

That determination served her and her family well over the years too. Like any family, there were difficult times, times when there wasn't enough. Angie's determination extended to her family in acts of love and compassion. When Angie's parents divorced, Angie was there for her mom and little sister, bringing food and ensuring that they were going to be all right. And yet she worried. She worried about her family, through the ups and downs of raising kids and 62 years of marriage. Like all of us, she feared the mistakes she made. She feared the disappointments that she caused. She feared that she hadn't done enough for those that she loved.

Fear has a way of derailing reality. It distorts who you think you are. It convinces you that lies are truth. It has you believing that you are not able to deal with things you are capable of dealing with. Do you know what God tells God's people more than anything else in the Bible? "Do not fear!" Do not fear because I want you to fully know who you are and celebrate it. Do not fear because I want you to have relationships that are life giving. Do not fear because I want you to always remember that no matter what you have done or who you think you are, I will always claim that you are mine.

I sat with her for about 45 minutes one afternoon, just a couple of days before Easter. Angie did not waste any time...the first thing out of her mouth was, "I'm dying and I'm afraid." As we talked, these were the image that I drew from so that she might trust that whatever that fear was, that it was not bigger than the God who had claimed her in her baptism. The fear is not bigger than Jesus, who out of love for all people willingly washed his disciple's feet, served them a meal, and then gave his life up as an act of unlimited love for the very people who betrayed him, denied him and abandoned him on the cross. No fear is greater than God's ability to bring life out of death, light out of darkness, and hope out of fear.

Not being afraid may be easier said than done. Death has the potential to be a frightening thing. It is one of the most uncertain elements of life. Death changes people. Death changes relationships. Death changes how we view our own lives. But we have this assurance from the God who has created each of you.

Do not fear because when you pass through the waters of grief, I will be with you; and through the rivers sadness, they shall not overwhelm you, when you walk through the fire of doubt you shall not be burned and the flame of fear will not consume you. For I am the Lord your God, the Holy One of Israel, your Savior. Do not fear, for you have redeemed you, I have called you by name, you are mine."

Today, we trust that these are the words that Angie hears as she looks at her redeemer face to face. We, who remain here among the living may still need the reminder to not be afraid over and over again. But we have this assurance from our redeemer as well, "It's the Father's good pleasure to give you the kingdom. Have no fear little flock."

Amen.