

A scarf. Sue was wearing it around her neck. He had come to see me but when he saw that scarf he immediately warned her against wearing a scarf in that manner. He reached out and grabbed it and said, “Never wear a scarf like this – someone can grab hold and they have control of you and can choke you.”

He came into my office, we talked and then as he was leaving he saw Sue, still wearing her scarf. He could not believe it. Did she not understand how dangerous it was to wear a scarf around her neck? He showed her once more what could happen. She told him she was not worried about being attacked in Avon Lake. He shook his head as if to say, “How could anyone be so foolish?”

Maybe the Pharisees were shaking their heads that day. They had warned Jesus about Herod – “Get away from here, for Herod wants to kill you.” Herod, who had already killed John the Baptist, was a real threat. But this was Jesus’ response, “Go and tell that fox for me, “Listen, I am casting out demons and performing cures today and tomorrow and on the third day I finish my work. Yet today, tomorrow and the next day I must be on my way, because it is impossible for a prophet to be killed outside of Jerusalem.”

Jesus had a plan and a purpose and a direction for his life. A warning about danger did not send him scurrying like a rabbit caught out in the open. He refused to give anxiety and fear control over his life.

Maybe Jesus sang a hymn from Israel’s hymnal that day. “The Lord is my light and my salvation, whom then shall I fear? The Lord is the stronghold of my life; of whom shall I be afraid? When evildoers close in against me to devour my flesh, they, my foes and my enemies will stumble and fall.” Not Herod, but the Lord would guide Jesus’ path.

We live in anxious times. Even in a decade of violent crime rates going down, we have grown ever more afraid. For the man who came by the office threats are everywhere. Anxiety is high in him. It seems obvious to him that anxiety ought to be high in everyone else. He thinks of being anxious as being realistic.

So many of our parents are anxious about their children's safety. They pass that anxiety on to their children. They think of being anxious and fearful as being realistic.

It is time that all of us start paying more attention to the one who is our light and our salvation. Bad things have always happened in this world but like Jesus God's people have not let the threat of bad things rule their lives. Jesus had people to cure and demons to cast out and a journey to Jerusalem. Even when he was killed in Jerusalem, God was not finished. The Father raised the Son to a new day, Jesus was raised out of death and into life.

I remember when I first moved here – people warned me about Cleveland being dangerous. I think about how much poorer my life would have been had I let those warnings limit my living. So far I have never been attacked but that does not mean an attack will not come tomorrow. But if I live in fear and anxiety today even the attack that never comes has power over me.

The Lord is your light and your salvation, whom shall you fear? Terrorists and criminals and diseases? Shall we become experts on how to avoid identity theft? Will we sacrifice our privacy and our freedoms out of fears about terrorists? Shall we become obsessed with washing hands and using sanitizers and eating organic foods?

One thing is sure: we are all going to die – our parents, our sisters, brothers, friends, partners, spouses, children – we are all going to die. But are we going to live?

Had Jesus run from Herod that day he never would have stopped running. If Jesus had let fear be lord over his days and nights then he would have begun a living death. Fear and anxiety are never satisfied, the more we give in to them the more they demand from us.

Christ came to live among us and die for us and be raised ahead of us so that we might live in faith. God may not protect us from every danger – someone could come along and grab Sue's scarf and rob her and beat her and rape her. Things like that do happen to people who love Jesus. But even if that should happen God has life planned for Sue. Not just beyond this world but right in this world - life. Herod cannot take life from us – we dare not let fear of Herod do so. We can live, really live in faith and if the worst comes God will bring us to new life, new hope, laughter

once more. How do I know? Every day you are proving it is true? The worst happens to you and God lifts you up and you live.

The Lord is your light and your salvation. Do not be afraid. Amen.

