

Sunday, March 19, 2023 Lent 4 ***This is Jesus! Part 4: Jesus Calms Our Fears***

***Psalm 34 Philippians 4:4-8 and Mark 4:35-41***

We continue in our Lenten journey with our focus this year being “This is Jesus”. Jesus asked his closest followers “Who do the people say that I am?” As believers, Christians who follow Jesus’ teachings on love and life we are still trying to figure this out—just who is the one we call Jesus- Messiah, Christ? As we seek answers we continue to grow in our faith and understanding of Jesus as our Saviour and Lord. He is the Lamb of God, Rabbi, Master, healer, teacher, miracle maker and the one who was present at creation and is present with us now. What do you believe about Jesus? And how does knowing Jesus help you live today?

We have focused on Jesus as Messiah the Christ and is the One who came to forgive us of our sins. He is also the provider for all our needs. We also focused on Jesus as one who was tempted just like we are tempted by Satan or devil. because he is fully God and fully human. Jesus was also human and because of this- he faced problems just like you and I, but he did not sin. Jesus can understand everything that you and I go through as he faced all the same challenges including being afraid. He also witnessed fear in the eyes of his closest friends and when this occurred, he taught them what to do and believe. But what is fear? Sometimes fear only comes to us when we face specific weather situations—blizzards, excessive rainfall and thunderstorms, or even extreme heat. But other kinds of storm come into our lives unexpectedly as well- when the storms arise with finances, marriage, career and even health storms and illnesses. When these occur we are not in control and often seem powerless. This is when fear rises and we want to do one of two things- fight or flight. Flight is fleeing from the situation and fighting it means enduring whatever comes and dealing with the aftermath. But one thing is certain- when we are afraid there is panic, anxiety and thoughts of whether one will make it through the situation and how one might be after it is over.

What is fear? As a noun fear is an unpleasant emotion caused by the belief that someone or something is dangerous, likely to cause pain, or a threat. As a verb, fear means to be afraid of (someone or something) as likely to be dangerous, painful, or threatening. Have you ever been full of fear? Not just anxious, but truly fearful? Maybe you were driving in a blizzard on a country road and saw only a few mailboxes to keep you on the road. What about lightning bolts landing not so far away in the distance? Or maybe you were walking and it was dark and you saw a shadow and it wasn’t yours? What about being in an unfamiliar city and you don’t have a GPS or phone to figure out where you are and where you are trying to get to? These are all different times when we might be fearful? There are also times when you might be afraid-

after having medical tests and not knowing the diagnosis or the treatment plan. Or maybe when you worry about others because of their circumstances and you cannot do anything to help but just listen. What do you do when you are fearful and afraid?

In the reading from Mark 4 we learn that in the evening Jesus wanted to go across the lake. He was tired and wanted to rest. So Jesus and the disciples get into the boat and along with other boats, they went out into the water. As they make their way across the lake, a windstorm arose causing the boat to beat high into the boat so much so that the boat was taking on water. But Jesus was exhausted and sleeping on a cushion. One can see the disciples being anxious and worried about the situation they are in. The wind is strong, the boat is swaying over from the waves and water is coming aboard. Jesus is asleep. What are they going to do? They are fearful of drowning. But we must remember that at least four of them are fishers- they are experienced people who have worked on this lake for many hours. Was the storm so severe that they had not experienced this kind of wave action before?

The disciples go up to Jesus and see that he is sleeping soundly. But they are afraid. So one of them says, "Jesus- don't you care that we are drowning/ perishing?" Maybe you have felt that you were in the middle of a storm and it feels like you're going to drown. You might ask, where are you, Jesus? Aren't you going to help me?

They must have been a sight! As they were drenched in the water from the high waves. Jesus then stares up at them and saying "What?" Jesus finally understands. He is awake now; he gets up and looks out the side of the boat. The text then states, "He rebukes the wind and says to the sea" Peace be still." Immediately the wind stopped blowing and the sea became calm. Now Jesus is a little cranky—after all, he was having a good sleep and they woke him up. He had been teaching all day and was just tired and needed to rest.

He asks," Why are you afraid? Have you still no faith?" Meanwhile they disciples are absolutely terrified; not because of the storm- all is calm again. But now they were terrified of Jesus. They had not seen this side of Jesus before. They even questioned each other, who is this? Even the wind and the sea obey his word. We must remember that Jesus could calm the waves and sea because he created them; He is the logos/word and controls all things by what he says and does. He is in complete control over the creation as well as spiritual, emotional, health, financial and relational storm that one faces. He is the one who calms all fears and is able to squash all of your fears and give you peace. Just as Jesus was in control of the storm on the sea, Jesus calms your fears.

The disciples were angry with Jesus and they questioned him, “Don’t you care..?” Does Jesus care? Yes, and in the midst of their anger because of fear, they call out to him. Sometime in the midst of all the storms we face in life, we think we are all alone. But we’re not. Most often we try to navigate the storm ourselves by bearing and enduring it. Often we turn to something to numb the pain. Yet Paul tells us in Philippians 4 to pray about everything. To tell God what you need in that moment and then thank him for what he has done. For what follows is a calming experience unlike others. God’s peace will come upon you and it exceeds anything one can understand. God’s peace will guard our hearts and minds. Remember this too- you will experience storms in your life. But don’t panic—pray. Call out to God and you will receive peace.

Jesus was in the boat with the disciples and they were fearful of drowning. They did not fully understand that He is God’s Son, born as a human infant to live as we do. For as a man, Jesus learned what it was like to live in different places, grieve the death of those whom he loved, and he developed friendships with all people. And Jesus is with you now. But you must remember that he never leaves you- even if you get angry in the times of your life or when you remember the tough times. Even when you remember how your life was and can still be changed because He has given you a new focus of what is important. Jesus is the logos, the one who is the word and whose words hold all things together. It is through Jesus that all are given a purpose. But we must remember His story of passion for it is through Jesus that we receive peace and the promise of eternal life.

Max Lucado in his book Fearless, (p.49) reminds us that to truly overcome our fears we need to follow these steps:

1. PRAY, FIRST “Casting the whole of your care [all your anxieties, all your worries, all your concerns, once and for all] on Him...” 1 Peter 5:7
2. EASY, NOW “Rest in the Lord, and wait patiently for Him.” Psalm 37:7
3. ACT ON IT. .Be a doer not a stewart
4. COMPILE A WORRY LIST. Maintain a list of all the things that trouble you. Then review them and offer them to God in prayer.
5. EVALUATE YOUR WORRY CATEGORIES. Themes emerge. Pray about them.
6. FOCUS ON TODAY. “Let us therefore boldly approach the throne of our gracious God, where we may receive mercy and in his grace find timely help.” Hebrews 4:16

7. UNLEASH A WORRY ARMY. Share your feelings with loved ones. Ask them to pray for those things that cause anxiety, fear and worry.

8. LET GOD BE ENOUGH. "Your heavenly Father already knows all your needs. Seek the Kingdom of God above all else, and live righteously, and he will give you everything you need.' Matthew 6:32-33

P-E-A-C-E-F-U-L

And most of all PRAY:

Loving God there are times in life when we face fears of all kinds. Yet if we believe and have faith in you, we are assured that you are with us always. Take away our fears, calm our hearts we pray and give us your peace. We ask in the name of the One who offers peace. Amen.