

Sunday, March 5, 2017

Psalm 32 (759VU)

Luke 5:1-10

Fear of Inadequacy

The season of Lent began on Ash Wednesday and so on this first Sunday we begin to focus on our theme for the season- "Freedom from Fear". In order to gain freedom from our fears, we need to name those fears. For many people today fear is a part of their everyday existence because they have fears in many elements of life. Some people are afraid of the actions of others, that is, words which hurt or even the possibility of being hurt –physically, mentally, spiritually and even socially. But what are the fears we have? If we are to Google or use another search engine to ask 'fear of' the Top Ten list includes: flying, intimacy, the dark, death, spiders, driving, love, God, success, being alone. But why are we afraid? What causes these fears and is having fear a sin? Just as there are many questions about our fears, there are also many answers about what causes us to be afraid. And it is perfectly natural to have fear. For it is through fear that we protect ourselves and others, and it is through experiences of being afraid, that we become stronger as individuals. For many people, the fears they have are simply questions which need to be asked and responses discovered. The fear of the unknown is what is common to many of our 'everyday fears'. So as we continue in our Lenten journey we will look at some of these fears and we will pray that God to help us understand these fears and through God's love and mercy we can move from fear to freedom.

In 103 places in the KJV of the Bible you will find the phrase "fear not" or "be not afraid". These references include those times when angels spoke to people—the shepherds or those who came to the empty tomb.. The people were afraid of what they saw and these angels were talking to them. The shepherds were half asleep in the middle of the night and watching the sheep when the glory of God shone around them—bright lights and they became afraid. They did not know what was happening or why.

Those who went very early in the morning to place spices on Jesus' body were afraid because they worried about how they were going to get into the tomb where Jesus' body had been lain. Yet upon arriving at the tomb the angels they met spoke to calm them down and not be afraid of what they saw== or did not see. Jesus' body was gone. But these are angels who have a special message to share with the people. We may not have angel visits to be afraid of,

but what are we fearful of today? If there is a potential for pain or an unrecognizable event, we become afraid.

Fear is a chain reaction in the brain that starts with a stressful stimulus and ends with the release of chemicals that cause our hearts to race, our breathing rate to increase and our muscles to be energized. This is also known as the fight-flight response. It is a natural response that our brain and bodies have in order to protect itself from harm. So when one voice tells someone else about not being afraid is not necessarily fear for physical harm, but fears that lie within a person's thoughts and feelings and how they relate to others. And under some circumstances it is a good thing that we have this response. But what are we really afraid of?

In our reading from Luke 5 Jesus is standing by the Lake of Gennesaret or Galilee with the people crowding around him and listening to the words he is speaking. He saw two boats left there by fishermen whom he saw washing their nets. He got into one of the boats, the one belonging to Simon and asked him to go out into the lake. Jesus then sat down and taught the people from the boat. After Jesus finishes talking, Jesus and Simon were just sitting in the boat. Then Jesus turns to Simon and says let's go out into deeper water and go fishing by putting the nets down. But Simon answered, "Master we've worked hard all night and haven't caught anything. He pauses for a few minutes. Then he says, "But because you say so, I will go out again and let down the nets." So it is just Simon and Jesus in the boat going out into the deeper water. Simon puts out the nets and they wait.

After a bit of time they caught a large number of fish that their nets were starting to break. Simon signals his partners who are on the shore and tending to their boat to come and help them to get the fish. When the nets are emptied, both boats are filled with fish almost beginning to sink. But it is the action of Simon which is amazing here.—Simon Peter sees all the fish, sees that both boats are now full and sinking because of the weight of the fish and he falls at Jesus' knees and tells him, "Go away from me. I am a sinful man." He and all his companions were astonished at the catch of fish they had taken- so were James and John, Simon Peter's partners. Simon realizes what he did by questioning Jesus as the master and his capabilities and feels the need to confess to Jesus and tells him to leave.

But it is what Jesus says to Simon, that catches our attention. He states, "Don't be afraid; from now on you will catch men." They then pull their boats onto shore and left everything and followed. Don't be afraid. What fear was Jesus addressing in stating this to

Simon? What role does fear play in this story? Simon is afraid that he is inadequate and unworthy before Jesus. He questioned Jesus' request to go out into the deeper water when they had been fishing already and caught nothing. He seems to give in to the idea—all right if you say so. And then after the net is full of fish Simon Peter tells Jesus to go away. He does not feel he deserves to be in Jesus' presence. Simon has sinned and confesses this to Jesus telling him that he is inadequate to follow him. They agree that Simon has sinned- but Jesus does two things.—he tells Simon not to be afraid, and then gives him a mission.

It should be noted that Jesus does not disagree with Simon about being unworthy, but Jesus counteracts this by stating—yes, you are unworthy because you are a sinner, but don't be afraid. Even in our unworthiness, we don't have to be afraid. Jesus was with Simon in the boat and was going to be with him and the other disciples for whatever was to happen next.

There are many of us who can truly relate to Simon Peter—he doubted Jesus request to go out into deep water to get fish. He realized this doubt in Jesus' capabilities was sinful but in this he felt inadequate and unworthy to be in Jesus' presence. But Jesus said this is what you should feel—not fear or being afraid, but know that you are my follower in faith.

How often are you afraid of who you are and can be before other people? That is are you fearful or do you feel inadequate when you compare yourself to others? There are two problems with this—why are you comparing yourself to others in the first place and secondly why are you thinking that you are inadequate before God?

Do you wake up take a good look in the mirror and tell yourself that you are not worthy or inadequate? Stop it. Maybe when you think about the kind of person you are words like average, or not bad come to mind. Sometimes you might see yourself as above average but there are also days when a closer look reveals insecurities and flaws that you cannot ignore. If you ever consider yourself unremarkable, ordinary or even inadequate you are not seeing yourself for who you really are. God made you and as it states in Psalm 139 vs 14—you are fearfully and wonderfully made! You were created as a result of God's divine love. You are fearfully and wonderfully made and we were set apart as the brightest and clearest creation We are able to create and understand art and drawing and we have a capacity for abstract thinking and can formulate explanations of why certain things occur. We also have the ability to discern between right and wrong and we seek forgiveness from others when this occurs.

Simon sinned when he questioned Jesus desire to go back out to fish. He might have been afraid of what might occur with Jesus in his boat and this might have been because of what Jesus had taught. We don't know for sure. All we do know is that the sin that Simon had was not fully believing who Jesus was and what he could do. Simon felt unworthy and the fear he had was a lack of faith in Jesus. He was afraid and when Jesus saw this fear he told him not to be afraid and then told him what his life's mission would be- to fish for people.

Fear is a very human reaction. How we respond depends on our degree of faith. When faith is weak or non-existent, fear becomes the controlling factor rather than faith. We begin to live by sight and not by faith, we cannot know the Christ of the cross, the resurrected Saviour.

As we continue our Lenten journey let us be reminded of God's promise to us from the prophet Isaiah 41:10: "Do not fear, for I am with you; do not be dismayed for I am your God. I will strengthen you and help you; I will uphold you with my righteous right hand." Believe this and trust God for if you believe, your fear will be taken away and you will have freedom to live and love others as Christ taught.