

Announcements

1. With Sarah's guidance, we put together over 30 Thanksgiving dinner baskets
2. 10 kids distance learning
3. Women of Faith is not meeting this week, will reconvene on Dec 16
4. Saturday Elders and Deacons: book study at 7am
 1. Men's breakfast @ 8am
5. Tree Lighting Dec 10 at 6:30pm
 1. Xmas carols
 2. Hot Chocolate

Fear Not! Behold

Luke 2:9-10

There is a command in scripture that is spoken of more than any other command. That command is something that we all struggle with. And God, in His great wisdom and care for us mentions it multiple times over and He gives us many examples of what it looks like and how to deal with it. That command is "Fear not." "Do not be afraid". It's actually mentioned in one form or another over 365 times. Tied to this command many times is "I am with you" or something like it.

When I was a little kid, I struggled with fear. The boogey man lived in my closet. There were all kinds of monsters, things that were going to get me that followed me in the dark. I got scared so I called out to my parents or I went to them and slept on the floor of their room. Why? Because they were a sense of safety and security. They would protect me. To be close to them, to see them, to be able to hear them, to exercise my relationship with them gave me a sense of security and reminded me that someone was there for me and loved me.

Can we be honest today. Fear doesn't just cripple children. It cripples adults. Adults are fearful. Every adult is fearful of something. Every adult must fight the urge to allow fear to control us. Sometimes we do it in a healthy way and other times not so much, but we all deal with fear. Often, our fears come in spurts, at random times. It isn't always all the time... otherwise it would be an extreme phobia.

We fear being alone. We fear not having control. We fear lacking power. We fear losing something, someone. We fear harm done to us. We fear a virus. We fear tyrannical government. We fear not having an answer. We fear not being good enough. We fear not having enough. We fear growing old. And the list goes on.

What brings fear? Sin. Plain and simple. Sin. Our personal sin and the sin of those before us. When Adam and Eve sinned, fear gripped them. How do we know this? They hid. They ran away from God. We do the same. Our guilt and shame drives us away, pushes us, forcing us from God and brain washes us into believing God doesn't love us. Or, worse yet, brain washes us into believing that there is no God, there can't be a perfect, sovereign, almighty God.

Fear is about power and control. When we give into fear, a right or wrong fear, we give that thing power and control over us. We give it right to dictate our thinking and way of living and how we will react.

There are really only two fears: we either fear God or we allow the 'spirit of fear' Paul talks about in 2 Timothy 1:7 to rule over us. The fear of God is the right fear. The 'spirit of fear' is the wrong fear.

The fear of God is a reverential awe of His glory and power that respects and knows the wrath and anger of God along with realizing the grace and blessing He wants to give. Fearing God means having such a reverence for Him that it has a great impact on the way we live our lives. The fear of God is respecting Him, obeying Him, submitting to His discipline, and worshiping Him in awe.

The 'spirit of fear' is anything that leads us to worry. When we give into that worry we will become anxious, and we are told to be anxious for nothing because God cares for us. Worry pulls trust away from God and seeks to trust something else. We begin to trust something/someone else to care for us in a way only God can. Paul tells us in Philippians 4:6-7 "Do not be anxious about anything, but in every situation, by prayer and petition, with thanksgiving, present your requests to God. And the peace of God, which transcends all understanding, will guard your hearts and your minds in Christ Jesus"

Sin leads to inappropriate fear. That is why it is so important to understand the power in confession of sin to God and that He does not condemn His children as Romans 8:1 tells us. It says, "So now there is no condemnation for those who belong to Christ Jesus." We don't have to fear being condemned. We don't have to fear losing His love for us. Instead of running and hiding like Adam and Eve, we can come to Him, admit our guilt, and He is faithful and just to forgive our sins. Hebrews 4:16 says, "So let us come boldly to the throne of our gracious God. There we will receive his mercy, and we will find grace to help us when we need it most" He is full of grace. He'll give it. He is merciful. He'll give mercy. He is ready and wanting to pour it out on those who yearn for it, who want it.

This very giving of God is manifested in the babe that laid in the manger over 2000 years ago that has caused so much controversy. The One so many Christmas carols have been written about. The One this season is about. The One that we are here today worshiping.

The theme God has laid on me for this Christmas season at Glide Baptist is Fear Not! To Fear Not! is to trust God. It is to trust who He is. It is to trust what He says. It is to trust what He does. It is to follow Him wherever He leads. It is to say, "Here I am. Send me. Do your will in me."

A few times in the Christmas story we hear of God's messengers telling God's people, "Fear Not!" When the angel Gabriel came to Mary. When the angel came to Joseph. And when the angels came to the shepherds in that field outside that little town of Bethlehem.

Lets read Luke 2:8-11. "That night there were shepherds staying in the fields nearby, guarding their flocks of sheep. Suddenly, an angel of the Lord appeared among them, and the radiance of the Lord's glory surrounded them. They were terrified, but the angel reassured them. "Don't be afraid!" he said. "I bring you good news that will bring great joy to all people. The Savior—yes, the Messiah, the Lord—has been born today in Bethlehem, the city of David!"

Shepherds were not your tycoons of society. Typically there was a head shepherd and there were under shepherds. Shepherding was a necessary profession. But, it was not a profession that was honored highly. Shepherds during the time of Jesus weren't trusted necessarily. If they

were to be a witness in court, their testimony may not be received, because you couldn't trust those scoundrels. Also, they were looked down upon by the pious religious, because a shepherd broke the Sabbath since they had to tend to their flock 7 days a week and their possible uncleanness. They weren't clean individuals, often younger, smelly, and spent most of their time outside the city gates.

Why do I share that with you? I thought it was interesting who God tells first of the birth of the greatest King, of the one, true Savior. He tells the shepherds. But what He tells them is absolutely important. "Do not be afraid...I bring you good news that will bring great joy to all people."

The shepherds were afraid of God's glory. They just came face to face with the supernatural. They weren't just in the presence of angels, but of God's glory, His holiness. They were faced with a power that was greater than themselves. Isaiah 6:1-6 gives us some sense of God's glory.

It was in the year King Uzziah died that I saw the Lord. He was sitting on a lofty throne, and the train of his robe filled the Temple. Attending him were mighty seraphim, each having six wings. With two wings they covered their faces, with two they covered their feet, and with two they flew. They were calling out to each other,

"Holy, holy, holy is the Lord of Heaven's Armies!

The whole earth is filled with his glory!"

Their voices shook the Temple to its foundations, and the entire building was filled with smoke. Then I said, "It's all over! I am doomed, for I am a sinful man. I have filthy lips, and I live among a people with filthy lips. Yet I have seen the King, the Lord of Heaven's Armies."

[Try and get into Isaiah's shoes. The weight of God's holiness, His glory was now felt. Isaiah was confronted with God's glory. He recognized his sinfulness, his brokenness, his frailty and God's almighty power, His perfection, His hatred for sin. Too often, we stop here. We let the fear of our sin and frailty grip us instead of embracing it and humbling ourselves before God and receiving from Him the very next piece which is His cleansing touch. Yes, it's painful. Yes, it's revealing. Yes, we will want to run from it. To fear the Lord is better than to fear guilt and shame. God's discipline is hard, but it is for our better. It reveals His love for us. It brings wisdom. It produces godly character. May we not fear sin, but fear God. May we yearn for what Isaiah tells us came next for him...]

Then one of the seraphim flew to me with a burning coal he had taken from the altar with a pair of tongs. He touched my lips with it and said, "See, this coal has touched your lips. Now your guilt is removed, and your sins are forgiven."

During this time in history that Jesus was born, Rome was a scary place to live, especially for the common Jew. There were two powers over you: the Roman government and then the Jewish leaders who were able to rule over the Jewish people. But yet, the Jewish leaders fell under the power of Roman government.

There was lots of corruption. It was a democracy that was subject to the whims of the governing officials. It was a heavily taxed society. The rich got richer, the poorer suffered. It was a hedonistic culture. Women were tools for pleasure and work. There was plenty of manipulation both by males and females to get into power. There was lots of idol worship even to the point of human sacrifice. There were Jews that claimed their Jewish heritage, but then gave their allegiance to Rome. Amongst the poorer parts of society, disease was an issue along with clean water and food. You had the Herod's who were ruthless, arrogant, hedonistic, and did as they pleased and used people as they pleased. They were murderers. Fear was something that absolutely gripped them. Herod the Great, when he heard of a king being born, he had every 2 year old male killed.

Luke starts off chapter two, what we call the Christmas story with a sentence that would send fear into people saying that "At that time the Roman emperor, Augustus, decreed that a census should be taken throughout the Roman Empire." Augustus was not a good guy. He was called savior. He was arrogant. He was greedy. And to not take part in the census and pay your taxes was at the very least a jail sentence to slavery, but very likely considered treason and you were killed. For the census, Joseph and Mary went back to his hometown of Bethlehem. The city of David. The city where the Messiah would be born. A small, humble city. And just outside that city was a group of shepherds, tending to their flock by night.

That first Christmas was not filled with joy and happiness. It was a scene of government rule. The scene, more so for the God-fearing person, was oppression, rejection, loss, possibly loneliness, and sometimes terror. God

had stepped in at just the right time. The scene for the shepherds was filled with fear, but a hope that brought joy and peace.

In the midst of what is a very dark time in humanity; in a time when so much had moved away from the heart of the God of the Bible to the god of man, the message was “do not be afraid” or “Fear Not!” Because God was about to show up on the scene. But, not in a way that was expected. But, it would turn out to be a humble yet powerful way. Salvation would show up in the form of a baby. All of what creation had waited for showed up as a powerless infant.

In verse 11, Luke says, “The Savior—yes, the Messiah, the Lord—has been born.” He explains who the savior is and he reveals his status and his lineage of royalty. He is the Messiah, the anointed One of God that all of the Old Testament pointed towards. He is the Lord, the savior that has absolute ownership rights. He is the final power. He is the final authority. He is ruler over all.

The good news the angels brought to the Shepherd was a message of a hope and a future. It was a message of joy. It was a message of God’s sovereignty. It was a message of salvation for all.

I will say, that this is one of those times that the older translations of scripture uses a word that gives a deeper, more powerful understanding of what is really being said. “And the angel said unto them, Fear not: for, behold, I bring you good tidings of great joy, which shall be to all people.” Behold.

Behold, in old english means to ‘thoroughly hold, to maintain, to retain, to hold in view.’ I believe message for us today, in our day and time, in our issues we have in our world and the issues to come, we are told to Fear Not! Behold.

We are to thoroughly hold on to, maintain in our every day, to retain in our brains, and to keep in view of our thought that we have been the good news that is for all of us. That good news is the Savior, who is the Messiah, who is the Lord of all has come and He is available to every one of us. He is our source of life. He is our source of strength. He is our wisdom. He is our source of joy. He is our source of hope. He is our

everything. He is the very place that fear is trampled. And we do that by doing exactly what the shepherds did.

Luke 2:15-20 says that “When the angels had returned to heaven, the shepherds said to each other, “Let’s go to Bethlehem! Let’s see this thing that has happened, which the Lord has told us about.” They hurried to the village and found Mary and Joseph. And there was the baby, lying in the manger. After seeing him, the shepherds told everyone what had happened and what the angel had said to them about this child. All who heard the shepherds’ story were astonished, but Mary kept all these things in her heart and thought about them often. The shepherds went back to their flocks, glorifying and praising God for all they had heard and seen. It was just as the angel had told them.”

Isaiah 41:10 “Don’t be afraid, for I am with you. Don’t be discouraged, for I am your God. I will strengthen you and help you. I will hold you up with my victorious right hand.”

Psalms 56:3 “But when I am afraid, I will put my trust in you.”