

Fear not

Based on thoughts 12/23/20

Preached 12/27/20

Introduction

- This morning I want to share a message entitled *Do not fear*
- I believe this is the Word of the Lord for ALC today as we prepare to enter a new year
- I'm not sure any of us predicted 2020! We gathered together on the last Sunday of 2019 - and had no idea what was in store.
- As we gather together for the final Sunday of 2020 - we're can't be sure of what 2021 brings - but the Lord's word **FEAR NOT**
- Song *I know who holds my hand* has these lyrics as a chorus:

Many things about tomorrow

I don't seem to understand

But I know who holds tomorrow

And I know who holds my hand

Message

Command: Fear not

- Do not fear - this is the command of the Lord for His people
- Not just in this hour, but it is the most often repeated command in scripture
- God encourages us "Don't be afraid!"
- Verse one: *But now* This message was to God's people - experiencing things they didn't expect or anticipate
- I don't know what 2021 holds, but I know the Lord's command to us is to still trust Him and not be afraid

Where does fear come from

- Most often repeated - because we are fearful!
- Ask: When did fear first become a thing in the human race?
- See **Gen 3:8-10 (NIV)** (8) *Then the man and his wife heard the sound of the LORD God as he was walking in the garden in the cool of the day, and they hid from the LORD God among the trees of the garden. (9) But the LORD God called to the man, "Where are you?" (10) He answered, "I heard you in the garden, and I was afraid because I was naked; so I hid."*
- There was no fear before sin - but because of sin we now run and hide from God
- See **1 John 4:18 (NIV)** (18) *There is no fear in love. But perfect love drives out fear, because fear has to do with punishment. The one who fears is not made perfect in love. Fear has to do with punishment.*
- Fear comes:
 - We doubt God (or someone in control)
 - We know we are not in control

- Deep in us we know God has a right (is justified) to be angry and punish us
- Yet according to this passage - when we know that we are loved - it *drives out fear*
- So the only way to NOT be afraid is to discover and rely on God's love

Reminders (how do I know he loves me?)

- The passage is not only the command to fear not, but contains a series of reminders as to why we should not fear
- Let's iterate through some of them

Created / formed

- God is our Creator
- He knows us, he realizes our strengths and weaknesses
- He became flesh and walked among us
- Whatever you are feeling - he knows it
- "I can't take any more" - he absolutely knows what we can handle and won't over do it!
- He is not "out there" somewhere - unaffected by what affects us - instead he became us. He knows where our struggles and weaknesses are.

Redeemed / we are his

- He bought us back. OT concept - when one was reduced to poverty - they sold their land, children even themselves to servitude
- But they could be bought out of that by another - a relative - a kinsman redeemer
- That person would pay the debt that was owed
- We had sold ourselves as slaves to sin - but He paid the price of our ransom

- Song *He paid a debt he did not owe...*
- Consider **1 Peter 1:18-20 (NIV)** (18) *For you know that it was not with perishable things such as silver or gold that you were redeemed from the empty way of life handed down to you from your forefathers, (19) but with the precious blood of Christ, a lamb without blemish or defect. (20) He was chosen before the creation of the world, but was revealed in these last times for your sake.*
- In v2 - we are his! He bought us with a price
- See **1 Cor 6:17b-18a (NIV)** (17) *But he who unites himself with the Lord is one with him in spirit. (18) Flee from sexual immorality. All other sins a man commits are outside his body, but he who sins sexually sins against his own body.*
- See **1 cor 6:19b-20a (NIV)** ...*You are not your own; you were bought at a price...*

Called us by name

- Not only did he pay for our sins - but he calls us to enter in to that relationship he created.
- See v2 *I have summoned you by name!*
- I love this imagery - "hey come here! I've got you!"
- Like in Genesis 3 when the Lord called Adam in the garden, but Adam hid because he knew he was a sinner
- Now Jesus calls to us "It's ok... you can come... I've paid the price!"

Savior

- Finally - the greatest testimony of God's love - is that he died to become our savior
- No need to reiterate the point - as we are familiar with the concept as I preach it often
- God loves us - enough to send His Son (Christmas)

- **Rom 5:8 (NIV)** (8) *But God demonstrates his own love for us in this: While we were still sinners, Christ died for us.*
- If you ever doubt that God loves you... look at the cross
- **Thought:** God couldn't love me - that's just pride. That you are so "special" that God's love / Christ's sacrifice couldn't apply to you. It feel like humility - but the reality is - that's just pride!!
- Remember **Rom 8:31-32 (NIV)** (31) *What, then, shall we say in response to this? If God is for us, who can be against us? (32) He who did not spare his own Son, but gave him up for us all--how will he not also, along with him, graciously give us all things?*

Promises

Finally, this passage contains two promises - so that when things get tough - we can rely on the promises he makes here

Note didn't promise we'd never struggle

- The promises are contained here in v2
- **Isa 43:2 (NIV)** (2) *When you pass through the waters, I will be with you; and when you pass through the rivers, they will not sweep over you. When you walk through the fire, you will not be burned; the flames will not set you ablaze.*
- Before we get to the promises - look at the context...
- "When you" pass through the waters, "when you" pass through the rivers "when you" walk through the fire
- God never promised us it would be easy
- This teaching has crept into the church - and as stuff gets ugly, people are becoming disillusioned!

Presence

- What did he promise? His presence

- "I will be with you" - He's promised he will never leave us or forsake us
- He will be with you until the very end!
- We are not alone - he is right there with us!
- We may not see him - but He has promised his presence!
- **Illustrate:** The three Hebrew children in the fire
- When arrested and given the opportunity to save themselves, they said **Daniel 3:17-18 (NIV)** (17) *If we are thrown into the blazing furnace, the God we serve is able to save us from it, and he will rescue us from your hand, O king. (18) But even if he does not, we want you to know, O king, that we will not serve your gods or worship the image of gold you have set up."*
- That's faith instead of fear
- **Note:** They knew God was able - but trusted him if he didn't
- When thrown into the fire - something strange happened **Daniel 3:24-25 (NIV)** (24) *Then King Nebuchadnezzar leaped to his feet in amazement and asked his advisers, "Weren't there three men that we tied up and threw into the fire?" They replied, "Certainly, O king." (25) He said, "Look! I see four men walking around in the fire, unbound and unharmed, and the fourth looks like a son of the gods."*
- He was with them in the fire!

Protection

- When you pass through the rivers - they won't sweep over you - the fire won't burn you
- Because of His **presence** - we will experience his **protection**
- He has promised that as we endure these things - we will not be harmed by them!
- Such a powerful promise!

Application / closing

Know / believe the word

- So important we go back to the Word
- It's the only thing that lasts
- So much damage has been (is being) done by people believing the word ...
AND
- Get in the Word, know the Word!

Trust his love

- Get right with him
- Remember his love
- We can run to him!

Rely on his promises

- Presence
- Protection