

5-2-21

Sermon- Fearless Love

Scripture- 1 John 4:7-21, CTW Ps 22:25-31

Hymns- 507,81,164

Theme- As believers abandon this world and seek after God's perfect love, they will find that they have nothing to fear. God's unconditional love grants us peace of heart and mind.

I. What is the Current Status of Your Love?

A. I believe that we have managed to reach a shameful milestone in the United States. We have become "phobia" crazy and have declared "phobi-warfare" when someone says something that apparently offends us!

When we declare such "offense," we stage our over-dramatic, theatrical performance to let everyone know how greatly we've been offended. We then work to accuse our offender of being some type of "phobic!"

We pillage the dictionary to find words that we can attach the word "phobia" to, in order to prove that we have been insulted! Words like: Homophobic! Islamaphobic!, and my favorite...as Charlie Brown was labeled by Lucy: Pantophobic...the fear of everything!

One thing that this covid-19 pandemic has taught the world is that it can be easily led and swayed by fear. We, as Christians, should feel truly blessed that our God, his son Jesus, and the Holy Spirit have shown us a better way to live that does not include fear.

When we are faced with times such as this in which "fear" is expected of us, may we, once again, hear the words of Jesus amidst the raging storm in **Matthew 8:26**, "Jesus replied, "you of little faith, why are you so afraid?" Then he got up and rebuked the winds and the waves, and it was completely calm."

B. When we allow Jesus Christ to be present with us and allow him to be our Savior, our Lord, our “everything,” we can soon discover just how “completely calm” things can be amongst a whirlwind of unhinged evil in the world.

Jesus was by no means kidding when he said in **John 14:27**, “I am leaving you with a gift—peace of mind and heart. And the peace I give is a gift the world cannot give. So don’t be troubled or afraid.”

The redeeming liberation from fear that we have been given as believers is the ability to cast out such fear and accept the gift of Christ’s peace – peace of mind and heart. It is a sacred trust gained solely by faith in Jesus Christ...we are to be **FEARLESS!**

II. We must want the Peace of Christ enough to pursue it, develop it, and live it out.

How do we do that? The answer is in verse 16 of today’s lesson: “we know how much God loves us, and we have put our trust in his love.

God is love, and all who live in love, live in God, and God lives in them.” Casting out fear and living in Christ’s peace of mind and heart, are all centered in the love of God.

A. Love has a double relationship to God. It is only by knowing God intimately that we **learn** to love, and it is only by loving that we learn to know God. Love comes from God, and love leads to God. Find it. **Dwell there!**

The word “abide” means to “live in” or “to remain,” “to last” or “to endure.” Abiding in God’s love is not passive. It is a sober, intentional, committed, focused, and disciplined determination to love God fully and passionately.

B. God must be our highest love....nothing else. In commandments one and two in **Deuteronomy 5:7-9**, “you must not have any other god but me. You must not make for yourself

an idol of any kind, or an image of anything in the heavens or on the earth or in the sea. You must not bow down to them or worship them, for I, the Lord your God, am a jealous god who will not tolerate your affection for any other gods.”

I believe the time is at hand for us to tear down the idols we may have built and return to God unlike ever before.

The pandemic has shamefully embarrassed a lot of churches, in my opinion, by catching them off-guard, unprepared, and ill-equipped to be capable of living in and witnessing to the incredible enabling power of the love of God!

We have not learned the lessons from the church at **Ephesus** in **Revelation 2:4-5**, where Jesus tells them: “but I have this complaint against you. You don’t love me or each other as you did at first! Look how far you have fallen! Turn back to me and do the works you did at first.”

I think the covid-19 shutdown and pandemic measures have acted like a “report card” to alert many people that they are not realizing God’s call to be **FEARLESS!**

III. We Must Truly Love the Whole Life God Has Given Us!

A. The saying is true: “Christian belief and Christian life are inseparably linked. As a person believes, so they live. As a person lives, so is their real belief.”

What we truly believe is how we will truly live. As I’ve said before, “your walk is supposed to talk louder than your talk, talks!” Nowhere, in all the Bible, will you find the advice advocating that you should “fake it until you make it!”

We are never to **pretend to love**...as Christians that would be the worst form of hypocrisy!

Romans 12:9 reminds us that “love must be sincere. Hate what is evil; cling to what is good.” The word “sincere” means that love is unconditional and self-sacrificing for this is the very form of

love that comes from God. This is why John had said earlier in **1 John 3:18**, “dear children, let us not love with words or speech but with actions and in truth.”

This is why Jesus issued his new command to his disciples in **John 13:34-35**, “so now I am giving you a new commandment: love each other. Just as I have loved you, you should love each other. Your love for one another will prove to the world that you are my disciples.”

B. How can this even be humanly possible? It isn't! We do not possess any single ability to do the impossible on our own authority or power...**AS HUMANS**. Loving the way God expects and as Jesus commanded, can only come through the **source** of such immense and immeasurable love: God, Himself.

We will never get to that level of love on our own. On our own, we will never be able to love God, or our neighbor, or ourselves at the proper depth or level. We must be rooted and grounded firmly in a personal and intimate relationship with God, through Jesus Christ that is empowered and lead through the Holy Spirit.

That is why our scripture states that it is perfect love that casts out all fear. God's love is perfect and that is why we deepen our relationship with God to experience and know what perfection looks like.

As we deepen this experience and understanding, we are capable, with the Holy Spirit's guidance, to share this love with others which includes family, fellow believers, friends, strangers, and those who are our enemy.

C. This can only happen if we are focused and centered on our relationship with God. We must be intentional by living in full awareness of God and committed to seeking after him in all areas of our life. All other values, things and commitments fall behind God in their proper order.

James 4:7-8 says: “**submit** yourselves, then, to God. Resist the devil, and he will flee from you. Come near to God and he will come near to you. Wash your hands, you sinners, and purify your hearts, you double-minded.”

We will never be content or find joy trying to live life however we please. As it has been said, “even partial obedience is still disobedience.”

It is all or it is nothing. We must grasp the significance of how radical, sold-out and obedience-driven this commitment is to live in God’s love.

IV. God willingly lavishes this love upon us and is willing to shower us to overflowing. Yet, so many of us stand at a distance, waffling, wavering and stumbling through life as if we were abandoned orphans. Remember from our previous lesson, the words of **1 John 3:1**: “see what **great** love the Father has lavished on us, that we should be called children of God!

A. We have Jesus Christ as Lord and Savior – forgiven, reconciled, set free to know and love God as Father. We have the Holy Spirit who assures us of our adoption, our forgiveness, yet empowers us, convicts us, and enables us to go on towards holiness and a life pleasing to God.

With the Holy Trinity of God the Father, God the Son and God the Holy Spirit, we have a holy realm of love in which to dwell. God’s love is a place in which we are welcomed.

God’s love invites us to stay, to dwell, and bask in the never-ending, always encompassing, ever-accepting unconditional love of a perfect father to his children.

Seeking after God and never stopping our pursuit is the reason we will never have to fear. We never have to fear the pending judgment like those who refuse him. We need not fear any unknown or death both physically or eternally or governments,

terrorists, or anything seen or unseen on earth or in the heavenly realms.

B. We have peace. We have joy. We have Jesus. We have the Holy Spirit. We have God the Father where we are centered in the depths of His infinite, holy and perfect love that is inconceivably sacrificial and unconditional...and is powerful enough to cast out all our fears.

Perfect love and earthly fear cannot co-exist. We cannot say that we are approaching God in love while, at the same time, retreating from Him to hide in fear. The presence of fear is but a sign that our love of God is not yet perfected or deep enough.

Philippians 3:7-8 reminds us, "but whatever were gains to me I now consider loss for the sake of Christ. What is more, I consider everything a loss because of the surpassing worth of knowing Christ Jesus my Lord, for whose sake I have lost all things. I consider them garbage, that I may gain Christ."

C. Let this world go. Surrender to Jesus. Allow the Holy Spirit's power to transform you into a child of God that is radically, sold-out and abandoned to his son Jesus Christ.

If you are willing to commit to this journey, then prepare yourself to enter a realm of God's **perfect love** that will consume you and inspire you to love as he loves.

His love will awaken within you a grateful love for Him that manifests itself in the love for others. Reaching your full capacity to love there is no longer anything that you could possibly fear. God's love is truly an endless life of love that casts out all fear.

Amen? Let us Pray...