

Sermon – September 13, 2020
“You Are Not Alone”
Crown of Life Lutheran Church
Pastor Dave Schilling

Grace, mercy, and peace be to you from God our Father, and from our resurrected Lord and Savior Jesus Christ. Amen

“And now Lord, open my mouth so that I can speak. Open our ears so that we can hear. And open our hearts so that we can change ... and truly experience peace through your grace, Amen.”

Welcome back for the final week of our “Fear Not” sermon series. We have covered a lot of ground in a short time, and talked through some challenging ideas. Not the least of which is the idea that you can be victorious in your battle against fear, whenever it strikes.

The flip side of victory is one that many of us have also experienced. The flip side is often called defeat, or at other times it may be labeled discouragement.

Either way, these are realities that we WILL experience in the long journey of sanctification and growth in our faith. Does it mean that we have failed and that we’re beyond redemption? Of course NOT ... it only means we are human.

And because of this, God sent His one and only son to redeem the world so that through Him we may have eternal life. God knew we could not get there on our own.

There are times we will experience defeat and discouragement. There are other times and seasons where we will have great growth and depth in our faith.

As the journey of sanctification ebbs and flows, we know that Jesus stays the same. He is the same yesterday, today, and forever. He is always with you on the journey, you are never alone.

Up to this point we’ve talked through some very practical ways you can deal with fear. Recognizing it, giving it back to God through prayer, and keeping your focus on one day at a time are powerful habits that can be developed.

Add to it a spirit of self-discipline and you’d start to think you’re invincible. So, why do you feel at times that you’re anything but invincible?

That’s where Jesus comes in, and REMINDS us that we are NOT alone.

Last week we talked briefly about the twelve spies and the promised land from Numbers 13 & 14. In the middle of this story is a young man named Joshua. You’ll recognize his name as he’s the one chosen to succeed Moses in leadership and take God’s people into the promised land. Yes, this is the same land that 40 years earlier, Joshua and Caleb believed the Lord would provide.

Let’s jump into the story in Joshua chapter 1...

“...the Lord said to Joshua ... get ready to cross the Jordan River into the land I am about to give to them ... I will give you every place where you set your foot ... no one will be

able to stand up against you all the days of your life. As I was with Moses, so I will be with; I will never leave you nor forsake you..." (Joshua 1:1-5)

And then, a few verses later God says...

"Have I not commanded you? Be strong and courageous. Do not be terrified; do not be discouraged, for the Lord your God will be with you wherever you go." (Joshua 1:9)

Do not be TERRIFIED, do not be DISCOURAGED.

Even the great Joshua, who led the Israelites safely into the promised land, was reminded by God himself to Fear Not". And what does God say to encourage Joshua? He essentially says, you're NOT alone, I'm WITH you always.

Let's jump into the New Testament now to Matthew 28 and the Great Commission. At the very end, the very last verse of Matthew's gospel after Jesus gives the disciples a final commission and exhortation to go out into all the world, He says...

"And surely I am with you always, to the very end of the age." Matthew 28:20

How terrified the disciples must have been to think about sharing the good news of Jesus, without Jesus. How kind and how powerful it must have been to hear Jesus himself tell them that He would always be with them, until the very end.

So, has that truth changed after all these years, and has the end of the age happened yet? The answer is an emphatic NO. Jesus is alive and well, and He's with you... right WHERE He said He would be.

One more point about Jesus; He was always incredibly honest with the disciples. Even when they didn't like the truth or couldn't understand it, they could always count on the unvarnished truth.

Let's turn now to one of those moments of truth from Jesus from our second lesson this morning...

"A time is coming and in fact has come when you will be scattered, each to your own home. You will leave me all alone. Yet I am not alone, for my Father is with me. I have told you these things, so that in me you may have peace. In this world you will have trouble. But take heart! I have overcome the world."
John 16:32-33

After Jesus' arrest and eventual death, the disciples were scattered, and many of them WENT back to their own homes. What an interesting point that he told them they would leave Him all alone, but that His father, God, would still be with Him.

Here is the bottom line ... the disciples DID to Jesus ... exactly what He promised NEVER to do to them ... leave them.

And what a promise, as He also told them in verse 33, you will FOR SURE have trouble in this life. Let there be no doubt ... this is a promise of God that we should remember every time we experience trouble in this world.

That word *trouble* is defined in a Bible (Strong's) dictionary as affliction, tribulation, oppression, distress, but more generally, it describes a pressure or a pressing together.

In other words, you could say that “In this world you will have pressure, affliction, oppression, and distress”, which I imagine we can all identify with in some form or another.

However real the pressure is in your life right now, and for whatever trouble or distress has yet to come, we celebrate today because Jesus has overcome this world.

In fact, when He says “take heart”, in verse 33, we are reminded of God’s encouragement to Joshua from earlier when He says, “Don’t be discouraged. Don’t be afraid. Fear Not”.

No matter HOW difficult it gets, no matter HOW impossible the odds may seem, we have a promise from God that is bigger and stronger than any problems we may see on the horizon.

We stand with the one who has already overcome, the one who chooses to stand with us ... UNTIL the very end of the age.

When Jesus is added to the habits you’ve been building and forming throughout this series, you can begin to see how someone like Paul was able to say with confidence in Philippians 4:13, “I can do everything through Him who gives me strength.”

When you know that the savior of the universe is committed to standing with you through every trial, every season, every affliction... you can walk with a bit more confidence in your step. There may even be a little more spark in your eyes, and a boldness in the moves you make through life.

It’s NOT that fear doesn’t exist, it’s that fear has a proper place in the hands of Christ. So, keep recognizing the unhealthy fear in your life and deal with it appropriately.

Don’t worry about tomorrow, but keep your energy focused on today. And above all else, remember that Jesus is with you every step of the way.

I might not be able to give you the audible voice of God today, like Joshua got at the edge of the promised land, or that the disciples got from Jesus, but I can give you the same encouragement that the Lord has given all throughout the Bible to His people.

- Do not be afraid...
- Do not be discouraged...
- But “Fear Not”...

God, and Jesus are with you always, until the very end. They will never leave you ... nor forsake you. Amen.

I pray each of you will go confidently from this series with some tools and a greater understanding of how to deal with fear and its effects in your life.