

Over All Fears

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[0 : 0 0] As we stand, let us pray. Blessed Lord, who has caused all scriptures to be written for our learning, grant that we may in such wise hear them, read, mark, learn, and inwardly digest them, that by patience and comfort of thy holy word, we may embrace and ever hold fast the blessed hope of everlasting life, which you have given us in our Savior Jesus Christ. Amen.

Please be seated. Well, in case that prayer sounds familiar, and it should, it's the one that we started our service out with, a collect for the second Sunday of Advent.

It's a great prayer because it asks God to allow us, to grant that we might be able to hold fast to the blessed hope that we have in Jesus Christ, the hope of everlasting life.

And it tells us a bit about what Advent is. This season is a great season because it helps to clear the spiritual cobwebs from our minds.

The timing of Advent is great because it takes place in a time where our culture is overcome with busyness and shopping and tense preparations for many obligations.

[1 : 2 8] And what it does is it focuses our minds on Jesus and our need to prepare for Him, who is our great priority in our lives. It tells us that Jesus has come to Bethlehem as God made man, that He has come to save us.

It also tells us that Jesus comes to us now, that He is living in us by His Holy Spirit as we believe in Him. And He is making us new.

He is transforming us. He is cleansing our souls. And also, the future is His. He will come again, as Jim was talking about in the children's focus.

He will come to judge the world, to transform creation. That is our certain hope, that we are called in Scriptures to embrace and to hold fast to. And so that prayer asks God to deepen our trust in Him, to make our faith have strong roots by allowing God's Word to go deep into our hearts.

It's asking God to make us people who have rich soil, rich soil for His Word that He has planted in us. And the passage that Mel read will help us to do this, especially as we pray that God this morning, that His Word will help us to hold fast to Jesus Christ.

[2 : 5 1] There's two things that really stand out about this passage. First of all, we see clearly who Jesus is. We see His authority over all kinds of powers in this world, over things physical and spiritual.

And we see that Jesus has power. He uses this power to save, to save people. And secondly, we see here that Jesus is looking for people to have faith.

He is calling them to faith in Him. And one of the great challenges to faith that we see running through this passage this morning is fear.

Fear of a number of different things. And also fear that Jesus is of Jesus' power. And is that power strong enough to save? Is He Lord? And every one of us this morning experience fear in our own lives.

It's part of what it means to be in a fallen world. You are all dealing with fear. Fears that may be hidden. Fears that you may have shared with people. But there are things that you experience in your life that cause you to be afraid.

[4 : 02] It's part of the fallenness of this world because of the Garden of Eden. The first thing that happened when rebellion with God, to God, was introduced is that Adam and Eve hid from God.

And they hid. Why? Because they were afraid. And fear has come into the world. Fear has a prominent face. In the past week or so, there are fears of terrorism because of the attacks in Mumbai.

And there's a certain fear in our own country because of instability in government. Because of a crisis which itself is created by fear of all the political parties of losing power.

And all of this is in the context of a fear that is worldwide that has to do with difficult and uncertain economic times. So there's a pervasiveness about fear.

And all of us experience it in personal ways as well. But Jesus warned us in the last passage that Jim preached on last week that fear can prevent us from flourishing as Christians.

[5 : 09] And I want you to look at the passage just before ours. Look at verse 13. It's just at the top of page 64. And in 13 and 14, Jesus talks about those who receive God's word.

And he talks about fear of danger. The ones along the path are those who... Sorry, in 13. And the ones on the rock are those who, when they hear the word, receive it with joy, but they have no root.

They believe for a while. And in time of temptation, and that word means testing. It means being confronted with a time of danger. And in that time, they fall away.

And as for what fell among the thorns, they are those who hear, but as they go on their way, they are choked by the cares of this world. And that involves things that are dangerous, things that cause us anxiety, as well as the riches and pleasures of life.

And those things crowd out faith, and it makes it so the fruit of that person's life does not mature. And what we have, starting right out, is that this, what Jesus has just talked about, happens in the disciples' lives.

[6 : 22] Look at verse 22 through 25. It's a familiar account. The disciples are in great danger. There is, of course, here, real reason to fear.

A massive storm has come up. Their boat was swamping. They were in great danger. Even the fishermen, who knew the lake so very well, and probably because they knew it well, were afraid.

And so they woke up Jesus. And they probably weren't waking him up because they thought he could do something about the storm. They wanted him to do the appropriate response.

They wanted him to panic with them, I guess. They wanted him to be awake as they experienced death together. We are perishing. We're all perishing, they said.

And it's something that they likely would have thought is beyond Jesus' jurisdiction. But Jesus spoke to the wind and the raging waves, and he rebuked them.

[7 : 20] It's an extraordinary picture of God, of Jesus, speaking to the weather. And there is an immediate response. Not only did the wind cease, but the waves immediately disappeared, and there was calm.

And of course, this is physically impossible. That waves would just suddenly cease, and you would see calm. And the first thing Jesus said after this remarkable thing, that the disciples must have been just wondering, what is happening here?

He says to them, where is your faith? He looks into their minds, into their hearts. Where is your faith? It was a time of testing and danger, and Jesus is saying, why didn't you trust me in that storm?

He is calling them to have a true faith in him that drives away fear. A faith that comes from understanding who he really is. Now it's very interesting, the response of the disciples, because you see this in verse 25, that they are afraid, and they marvel, and they have good reason to.

It is something that they cannot fit into their minds, what they have seen Jesus just do. And they say to one another, who then is this, that he commands even wind and water, and they obey him?

[8 : 45] Well, there is fear, and there is marvel, because really the only answer is God himself. This is God himself. They would have known Psalm 107, that says, then they cried to the Lord in their trouble.

He delivered them in their distress. He made the storm be still, and the waves of the sea were hushed, and then they were glad because they had quiet.

Who is this Jesus? He is the God who has created the universe, the one who is in charge of all things in nature, on heaven and on earth.

And for the first time in Luke, we see that Jesus is God, who alone has authority over the forces of nature. We see that aspect of Jesus' authority, and that he uses that power to save his people.

And I think for us, there is a, God is speaking to us. There is a strong call for us to look at the situations that we fear, and that we may think is beyond Jesus' jurisdiction, his power.

[9 : 54] And Jesus asks us, do you believe that I have authority over those things? Do you believe that Jesus has that authority? Do you believe that he uses his power to save you, to come into your life, into your situation?

And Jesus is saying that if you have a right understanding of who he is, of his incredible authority and his ability to save, your faith will displace fear.

It will push it out. And it's something that the disciples had to learn over time. It's something that we, as Christians, learn over the life of our, over our Christian life.

God is about, through his word, making our soil that receives his word, more and more fertile, more and more able to receive God's promises into our lives.

Now, not only is Jesus shown to be Lord of nature, but in our passage today, he's shown to be Lord over all spiritual evil, of all things that are unclean and impure spiritually.

[11 : 00] And so what Jesus does is after that calming of the storm, they continue and he leads the disciples across the Sea of Galilee to a place that is what Jewish people would consider the most unclean place they could possibly imagine.

The most unclean spiritually. It is a Gentile area known as the country of Gerasenes and in that unclean area, it's not the people of God, there's a man possessed by an unclean spirit and he lives in a cemetery which are, they are ritually unclean unclean.

And they're near a herd of swine that, I try to say that really fast, it is a herd of swine that is unclean food as well.

It's a place of fear, not only of uncleanness but of fear as well because the man who has been possessed by demons has really struck fear into the nearby city.

They have tried to contain him, to chain him up and to have a guard but he has broken free and the demons have driven him out to this place in the cemetery.

[12 : 10] And that's the place that Jesus comes to. And immediately when Jesus comes, there is an extreme response on the part of the man who's possessed. There is fear.

The ones who have been creating fear and havoc suddenly become fearful themselves. And they say to Jesus, because they know his authority over him, don't send us into the abyss.

Don't torment me. And that is because they cannot stand in the presence of the one who came to defeat and to rule over spiritual evil. And in a picture, a picture that's very helpful for us and for the disciples that are there, he allows these demons to go into a herd of pigs and they go into the water and they are drowned.

What is unclean is cleansed. What happens is that there is a picture of the utter destruction of evil at Jesus' word. And there is an amazing result in verse 35.

When the people of the city came out to see what had happened, they came to Jesus and they find this man from whom the demons had gone. And there is this incredible total change in him, reversal.

[13 : 24] Instead of demons speaking their words through him, he's sitting at the feet of Jesus, receiving the word of God, learning. He's inwardly digesting, reading and marking in a sense, God's word.

He is no longer naked, he is clothed. Instead of violently breaking chains and being out of control, he is in his right mind. He is at peace. There is this sense of right relationship in his life.

He is completely healed, as it says in verse 36. He was healed. And the reaction of the crowd is something that's very interesting.

It's strange in one way because they are afraid. In verse 37, it tells us that all the people asked Jesus to depart from them.

They were seized with great fear, so he got into the boat, Jesus did, and he returned. It's an odd thing. You wonder, this is good news. This man who they've seen really tormented out of his mind is made miraculously well.

[14 : 33] Why would they be fearful? Again, it's because they had an incomplete understanding of who Jesus is. And that's the problem. That's the thing that causes fear, and it also keeps us from having fear driven from us.

It's not understanding who Jesus is fully and having faith in his power and his ability to save. And so they probably thought that Jesus might ruin their economy.

Look what he did to the pigs. They might have thought that this is a man who has power beyond anything we can imagine. It might not be for our good. It might be disruptive. And so they reject him.

They send him away. They didn't know Jesus' power was for their salvation and healing. But, that is why when Jesus left them, he actually didn't give up on them.

It's a wonderful picture of Jesus' love and his mercy that he said to the healed man who really wanted, he begged Jesus, can I go with you? Can I go with your disciples?

[15 : 36] He says, no. I want you to return home in verse 39 and declare how much God has done for you. And you see this wonderful obedience.

He went away proclaiming throughout the whole city how much Jesus had done for him. It is the way to respond in faith. It's the way to live out this freedom from fear.

And our culture is a bit like the Gerasenes. There's a real fear and rejection of Jesus being all, all powerful, of being Lord, of having authority and having spiritual rule.

I think there's a worry that might mean oppression. It might mean unfair treatment. And for that reason, our culture around us needs to know that Jesus' power and his authority is for their blessing.

That his purpose is to save and to heal those who think they are far from God as the Gerasenes thought of themselves. And I think the released man is a winsome person for us who teaches us a lot about how to reach fearful people.

[16 : 48] Because what he did was simply to go throughout the whole city telling people how much Jesus had done for him. And he perseveres in this. It's very difficult for that city to argue with a man who everyone knows his story is true.

They've seen the before and the after. He's been released by Jesus. He's a man of fertile soil who holds fast to Jesus' word with an honest and good heart and he bears the fruit with patience.

See, he shows us a very good way to reach pluralistic people. If we apply it to ourselves, though, it means that we need to be clear about the gospel. We need to know how much Jesus has done for us.

We need to know in what way we have been released by Jesus. Do we know what is good about our new life in Jesus so that we have something to talk about to our city, to those who don't know the lordship of Jesus?

Well, the last of these extraordinary events that reveal Jesus' authority and his ability to save involve two very different people. And that's in verses 40 to the end of the chapter.

[18 : 04] chapter. One person is Jairus who's a ruler of the synagogue so he's got a high religious status. The other one is a woman who's ritually unclean.

She is separated from the people of God and from the life of relationship with God with other people. She is subject to very strict regulations which meant she had to stay away from family and the community so she would not make them unclean.

It's a socially and religiously devastating place to be in. But both of them understand their need for Jesus. The ruler Jairus knows it because his precious daughter his only daughter who's 12 years old is dying.

But Jesus has the ruler wait because the woman has come up to Jesus in the middle of the crowd behind him and touched the fringe of his garment. It's a very risky thing for her to do.

It means touching all kinds of people which is illegal. She has to push her way through to get there and the result of this would be catastrophic for her. And she doesn't know for sure how Jesus is going to respond either when she does that.

[19 : 17] But the fact of the matter is her life was ruled by fear. She had been isolated for 12 years. All of her money was gone. There is no hope in her life. And she has heard Jesus' word.

Here is the only hope in her life. And immediately of course her bleeding stops. And at that point Jesus stops what he's doing and he says to the whole crowd who has touched me?

Now Peter's the only one who has a nerve to say you got hundreds of people touching you. Why would you ask who touched you? But Jesus says there's something different about the way that somebody has touched me.

They have touched me in faith is the implication. He says power has gone out from me. Which is an incredible picture because it says that Jesus' power to save is abundant.

It is overflowing. It just comes out of him as people come to him in faith. But he says this and the woman it says who has been hiding in fear even after healing she's trembling.

[20 : 25] she comes up and she falls down and she tells everyone how she had touched Jesus and been healed. It's a public confession. It's a testimony of her faith really.

And what Jesus did through that was he reinstated this woman to the whole community. There was a wholeness. Not only is she physically healed but her relationships are healed too.

She is brought back. And that's why it's so marvelous that in verse 48 Jesus calls her daughter. It means that she is brought back into the family of God. Not only that but brought into the family of Jesus Christ.

Remember the ones who hear God's word and do it from the last passage. And he says to her your faith has made you well. Made you whole. Go in peace.

And that word peace means a place of not having any fear. Fear is pushed out through her faith by her clinging to Jesus and his word.

[21 : 27] Jesus has brought her back into the community and showed the crowd the kind of faith that he was calling for. Well of course as this is happening we sort of forget about Jairus who is in the background and he's been waiting all this time as these things are happening.

And as he's waiting he's experiencing for sure he is experiencing in his heart the worst kind of fear. It's the fear that comes when parents know their children are in danger.

And here Jesus is making him wait. Jesus' timetable is not Jairus' timetable. And I don't know I'm sure that all of you have experienced this before. Of wanting something to take place that you are hoping for at God's hand.

And he is not on the same timetable or schedule. He is doing something very different. And as he waits in anxiety the worst of his fears are confirmed. A man comes up to him and says it's too late don't bother the teacher your daughter has died.

That was a devastating thing for him to hear. His fears would have overwhelmed him at that point. But Jesus heard this and he said these words which really are key to our passage and that we should really pay attention to in verse 50.

[22 : 48] He says do not fear only believe and she shall be well. There's a call here to Jairus and to us as well to replace fear with a right understanding of Jesus.

A right understanding of his ability to save. And wonderfully what happens is the father perhaps in a daze goes with his wife with Jesus into their house.

And you see they sort of go through a gauntlet. You see in verse 51 that they're going through the crowd together they come to the house he permits no one to enter with them Peter and John and James are there the father and mother and then they come in the house and then they have all the people weeping as they go through the house and bewailing her.

But Jesus said do not weep for she is not dead but sleeping. And of course what comes next it's laughter it is unbelief. They are laughing because he said she was asleep knowing that she was dead.

But in contrast to this and with the parents there next to the child he says two words that changed their life forever and of course the girl's life forever just two words.

[24 : 09] he said to her child arise those two words were so powerful that life came into that girl and she was resurrected.

This is the greatest miracle that can happen to humanity is that they would be raised from the dead and Jesus showing his authority over death itself he couldn't have said a stronger word and the parents are absolutely amazed and that's probably because Luke couldn't find a stronger word they were overwhelmed not with fear and grief this time but with joy and wonder at Jesus being revealed to them in this way to them and they responded to Jesus by actually doing what he told them.

The first thing he does is command them it's a very earthy scene go get her something to eat she's hungry she's 12 years old she's been through a lot go get her something to eat and they do.

Now I want to close by saying that the disciples are people we have to pay attention to again here. They've observed all these things that we have just observed this morning you know Jesus' power over nature is power over unclean spirits power over death power over sickness and ostracism and relational brokenness all of these things they have seen and the question is how will they respond and it's our question too how will we respond will our faith in Jesus Christ be strengthened will our understanding be more complete that we might trust him with our lives and what God is doing here is he's moving his disciples towards good soil he is moving them to be fertile places for God's word to go into their lives do they understand who he is will they believe and obey and so in chapter 9 at the beginning he calls the 12 together and he sends them on a mission to preach the kingdom of God and heal and I gotta say this must have been a scary moment for the disciples he's telling them

I want you to continue the ministry that I am doing on your own just go out and do it and not only that but in that mission Jesus says you're to trust God completely don't take anything for your journey depend on hospitality of strangers and be ready for rejection and the disciples did it and the wonderful thing about their faith overcoming their fear is that a hundredfold fruit happened in their lives for the sake of the gospel because of that risky thing that they did it says at the end that they went through the villages in verse 6 preaching the gospel and healing everywhere that God's word went out in a way that couldn't have happened if it had been confined to Jesus' ministry and this is a call for us it is a call for us that Jesus is calling us to be released from our fears to trust him and his rule to save us to actually be the one who will save us from the things that make us fearful people it is a call for us to hear

[27 : 30] Jesus' word do not fear only believe and to hold fast to his word because the gift that God gives through that is he frees us from fear he frees us to serve him with a glad mind and a glad heart so let us close with a prayer and I'll pray just before we're going to have the prayers of the people as well let's just bow our heads for a moment father in heaven we thank you that you reveal Jesus to be the lord and savior of all the world we thank you that Jesus is lord of even the things that are most fearful in our lives and I do pray for anyone who here is experiencing fear that is debilitating or who that is preventing the flourishing of your word in their lives to take place and I ask father that you would grant them faith in the Jesus that Luke has revealed here we ask your blessing upon all of us today equip us to be those who are faithful to you who live for you who are able to say the marvelous things that God that you have done for us that you have released us from and that you have given us a new life following your will in

Jesus name we pray amen please kneel for prayer father we thank you this morning in the hope of your son Jesus Christ and while some of our hopes in this season may be for ourselves for me phones or me pods help us to know that our hope is really centered in the coming of Jesus we thank you for the warmth and brightness he brings into our lives for the happiness and joy that comes from knowing him and the salvation he offers when we're sorry for our sins we long for his return we long for the glorious future when we will praise and acknowledge him as we should when the paucity of words in our human natures will no longer be boundaries to our worship in the meantime however father we thank you and worship you hallowed indeed be your name lord in your mercy as we heard in Dan's sermon we asked for the cleansing power of

Jesus in our lives take any entrenched evil from us restore us to our right mind so that we sit at his feet in thankfulness and adoration we ask that we will live like the man from whom the demons came out that we will live our lives in a way that brings others to know you and your saving power and we ask for the faith of the woman who braved all dangers just to touch the cloak of Jesus help us to have her courage and her willingness to testify to Jesus and his love and work in her and we ask that no matter where we're at or what situations we face this week that Jesus will never have to ask of any of us where is your faith

Lord in your mercy we ask for the missionaries in the city particularly this morning for Paul ratzoff of lighthouse marion maxwell serving in the genesis program and for dan and frau gal in seeds of hope we ask that we ask that you will keep them safe and use their witness and faithfulness to bring those they work with to you we ask that you also help us as missionaries also in our various lives we ask that we may reflect your light and your hope amongst those we interact with may they see you through us Lord in your mercy we ask for your healing power to those who are sick and needy and this morning we especially think of

Paul Wynne Rowena Fiona Anne and Mark and in a moment of quietness we ask personally for those we know who need healing and we ask as well for our friends and family who don't know you in this quiet moment we pray for healing and for the absolute healing that comes from knowing you Lord in your mercy and finally Lord we ask for your protection during the coming week keep us safe deliver us from evil guide us now as you have in the past help us to bear in mind that it's not Advent or Christmas that counts as such but our

[33 : 34] Lord Jesus Christ to him be all honor and glory amen Jerry him he he