

When We Are Afraid of Being Hurt

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[0:00] Have a seat. My name is Dave Nannery. I'm one of the pastors here. It is a good thing for us to be able to gather together. And it's an incredible blessing that I have the opportunity to preach from God's word this morning and bring it to you.

So let me open with prayer and then I'd love for us to dive into God's word. Let me pray. Father, I thank you that we are gathered here today.

Thank you for all the people that you have brought in today. Lord, you have your purpose in this. You know what we need. And I ask, Lord, that from what I preach, would you bring to mind to each one of us exactly what we need.

Help each one of us see how your words address our heart, how they challenge us, how they help us. We pray not only for those here, but for those at Bible-believing, gospel-preaching churches throughout our town, that your word may be a blessing to them.

And we pray as well for the youth who are all at Camp Stillwood and pray that during that time, they may come to deeply know and understand you and to hear your word and to be transformed.

[1:19] Give us eyes to see, ears to hear, hearts to understand what you have in store for us in Christ Jesus, our Lord. Amen. Amen. Okay.

Well, this is part two from last week. And last week we considered the first few verses of Luke chapter 12. And it was an event, some of Jesus' teachings, that came right after Jesus did the unthinkable thing of taking a perfectly nice dinner party and making it incredibly awkward by confronting the religious leaders who had invited him.

And that's because Jesus could not stomach the hypocrisy that he was seeing in them. And rather than just simply letting that pass, letting that slide, Jesus had the sense that what the right thing to do was, was to call them to account for that and to warn them.

And we saw the heart of Jesus as he then turned and warned his disciples and through them warned us against that same hypocrisy. He warned us against the danger of hiding who we are when others try to see through us and humiliate us.

Often in those moments, those are the moments we are most tempted to hide. And at the same time, we saw the goodness of Jesus, the trustworthiness of him, that Jesus always acts with integrity.

[2:47] He always tells the truth, even when nobody else is telling the truth. Even when nobody else is acting with integrity, he does. And it's so wonderful if we are called by the name of Christ to know that we have Jesus doing what we cannot do, doing what we have failed to do on our behalf.

But Jesus doesn't just stop there. He didn't stop it. We stopped our reading, stopped our studying at the end of Luke chapter 12, verse 3. But Jesus actually had more to say to his disciples.

Because they were remaining under threat of being exposed, but also under threat of being harmed, of being hurt by the mob, by the religious leaders.

And we know that's not an idle threat because Jesus himself ended up being crucified by those in authority. This was a real threat to them. And what Jesus has to say to them is going to be very counterintuitive.

It is, Jesus, when he's going to give counsel to his disciples on this subject, he is not going to say what you and I would probably think of saying. Jesus has a way of often doing the most counterintuitive things, going in directions nobody expects.

[4:06] And that's what happens here today. And two questions are going to come up as we look at what Jesus has to say. I find this often raises two big questions in people's minds.

Number one, is God a God of wrath or is he a God of love? Is he a God of wrath or is he a God of love? Then number two, should our lives be characterized by fear or by fearlessness?

Should our lives be characterized by fear or by fearlessness? Now let's hear what Jesus thinks about God, what he thinks about us. He faces down a threatening situation that could potentially end his ministry and could bring a lot of harm to him and to his disciples if things go very, very wrong.

So this is in Luke chapter 11, starting in verse 53. And I'm going to read through chapter 12, verse 7. These are on page 870. If you're using one of the Bibles, our usher's handout.

Page 870. And I'm going to start chapter 11, verse 53 through chapter 12, verse 7. And we are picking up right as the threat starts to surface.

[5:14] Here's what Luke writes. As he went away from there, the scribes and the Pharisees began to press him hard and to provoke him to speak about many things, lying in wait for him, to catch him in something he might say.

In the meantime, when so many thousands of the people had gathered together that they were trampling one another, he began to say to his disciples first, Beware of the leaven of the Pharisees, which is hypocrisy.

Nothing is covered up that will not be revealed or hidden that will not be known. Therefore, whatever you have said in the dark shall be heard in the light. And what you have whispered in private rooms shall be proclaimed on the housetops.

I tell you, my friends, do not fear those who kill the body and after that have nothing more that they can do. But I will warn you whom to fear.

Fear him who, after he has killed, has authority to cast into hell. Yes, I tell you, fear him. Are not five sparrows sold for two pennies?

[6:29] And not one of them is forgotten before God. Why, even the hairs of your head are all numbered. Fear not. You are of more value than many sparrows.

This is God's word to us this morning. And so, as you read that, particularly looking at verses 4 through 7, we ask this question, is God a God of wrath or a God of love?

And the answer, according to Jesus, is yes. Should our lives be characterized by fear or by fearlessness? And according to Jesus, the answer is yes.

Yes. I, moments like these, I just find Jesus to be so remarkable. Because in the space of a few seconds, in just a few verses, Jesus tells us, don't fear.

Then immediately he says, fear. And then he says, fear, again. And then he says, don't fear. Well, you know, in one breath, Jesus speaks of a God who casts people into hell.

[7:35] And then in the next, he speaks of a God who cares about sparrows. Jesus has this amazing picture of his father.

He is not afraid of all of these paradoxes, these things that seem to contradict each other, but actually both are true at the same time. Like a fabric woven out of two threads of different colors that produce something special.

I want to talk about that for a minute before we work our way through Jesus' teaching. Because this passage, this is a classic example of the way that Jesus communicates to the people that he loves. And this, he's communicating this way for a reason. It is for our good. And it can sound a little bit crazy at first. If you like your God and you like your religion to be tidy and safe, this is hard to take. To our modern ears, Jesus sounds like he's swinging wildly, irrationally between two extremes. To our modern ears, he sounds in one moment offensively harsh and overbearing.

[8:45] And then in the next moment, he sounds offensively soft and squishy. But Jesus knows exactly what he's doing. He is a good shepherd.

He's wise. He knows how to speak to you and me, to the sheep. He's the perfect example for a loving leader. And he sets the standard for how a genuinely righteous leader communicates to the people he loves.

And this is so important, right? When we stand before God, we just don't have the righteousness, the goodness, the wisdom. But Jesus does. How good it is to be called by his name, to belong to him, to have faith in him.

One of the best ways to understand what Jesus is doing here is to look at an example of a modern leader who communicated like this. I once read the author Jim Collins in his book Good to Great, in which he describes what he calls the Stockdale Paradox.

And Collins names that after the American Admiral Jim Stockdale. And Stockdale was imprisoned by the North Vietnamese during the Vietnam War. And here's what Collins writes about him.

[9:53] He said, tortured over 20 times during his eight-year imprisonment from 1965 to 1973, Stockdale lived out the war without any prisoner's rights, no set release date, no certainty as to whether he would even survive to see his family again.

He shouldered the burden of command, doing everything he could to create conditions that would increase the number of prisoners who would survive unbroken. While fighting an internal war against his captors and their attempts to use the prisoners for propaganda.

And then Collins writes about his experience as he is reading Stockdale's autobiography. And then his experience of meeting the man in person. He says, as I moved through the book, I found myself getting depressed.

It just seemed so bleak. The uncertainty of his fate. The brutality of his captors and so forth. If it feels depressing for me, how on earth did he deal with it when he was actually there and did not know the end of the story?

I never lost faith in the end of the story, he said when I asked him. I never doubted not only that I would get out, but also that I would prevail in the end and turn the experience into the defining event of my life, which in retrospect, I would not trade.

[11:21] Then Collins works up the courage to ask Stockdale a difficult question. I asked, who didn't make it out? Oh, that's easy, he said.

The optimists. The optimists. I don't understand, I said, now completely confused. The optimists. Oh, they were the ones who said, we're going to be out by Christmas.

And Christmas would come and Christmas would go. Then they'd say, we're going to be out by Easter. And Easter would come and Easter would go. And then Thanksgiving, and then it would be Christmas again.

And they died of a broken heart. Then he turned to me and said, this is a very important lesson. You must never confuse faith that you will prevail in the end, which you can never afford to lose, with the discipline to confront the most brutal facts of your current reality, whatever they might be.

Collins then distills this down to what he calls the Stockdale paradox. Retain faith that you will prevail in the end, regardless of the difficulties. And, at the same time, confront the most brutal facts of your current reality, whatever they might be.

[12:33] Do both. And what Jim Collins is describing is that this is how a good leader must call his people to live. He must call them to a faith and confidence.

And as Christians, call to a faith and confidence in the Lord's salvation, in the work he's going to do. That there's a new heavens and a new earth coming. And then also, come face to face with how hard things are.

And come face to face with the real threats that you are experiencing. That's the way a righteous person thinks in times of suffering, in times of trouble. And Jesus is the ultimate righteous man, the ultimate good shepherd.

And he personifies this way of thinking and leading. If you have spent a lot of time in the Gospels, you know that that is Jesus to a T. He never shies away from the brutal facts.

If we go back to chapter 11, verse 53 in Luke, and you see the facts of the situation that his disciples are in. Luke says, as he went away from there, the scribes and the Pharisees began to press him hard and to provoke him to speak about many things, lying in wait for him to catch him in something he might say.

[13:49] So Jesus and his disciples, thanks to his confrontation of the Pharisees and the other religious leaders, they are now in danger. These powerful, influential, intelligent, crafty, politically manipulative people, they're trying to see through them.

They're trying to humiliate them publicly. And it's a threatening situation because there is this huge mob of thousands of people who are trampling over each other to get to Jesus.

And that mob could turn on Jesus at a moment's notice that the Pharisees get him to say the wrong thing. How does Jesus respond to this situation?

Well, last Sunday we saw that Jesus gathers his disciples together and first thing he does is he warns them that the greatest danger they are facing, it isn't outside of them.

The greatest threat isn't these religious leaders who want to expose them. The greatest threat isn't the mob. The greatest threat is what's inside of them, what's in their own hearts.

[14:54] The greatest danger is not that the Pharisees would get them. The greatest danger is that they would become like the Pharisees. That's what the greatest problem is. That hypocrisy.

And Jesus says they must fear God who knows who we are. The God who will reveal our secret words on the day of judgment. But Jesus isn't done yet. He has words of counsel for their fear of being seen and exposed. But now he has words of counsel for their fear of being threatened, of being harmed. And he continues in verse 4. I tell you, my friends, do not fear those who kill the body and after that have nothing more that they can do. But I will warn you whom to fear. Fear him who after he is killed has authority to cast into hell. Yes, I tell you, fear him. [15 : 51] Are not five sparrows sold for two pennies? And not one of them is forgotten before God. Why even the hairs of your head are all numbered. Fear not.

You are of more value than many sparrows. Now notice that Jesus makes an assumption at the beginning of these verses. He assumes that there are those who will kill the body. Who will physically harm his disciples to the point of killing them. There are people out there who want so badly to stop Jesus and to stop his disciples that they are willing to kill them. If nothing else works, they'll kill them. And that's, in the end, exactly what happens to them. Jesus is put to death by the collaboration of Jewish and Roman authorities. And it is only by the power of God, because he is the son of God, that he triumphs over that death that they inflict on him, that he rises from the dead.

[16 : 54] Of his disciples, those who became the 12 core apostles, all of them but one were put to death for their faith following the resurrection as they brought the good news of Jesus to the world.

So this was a real threat they faced. And Jesus confronts the brutal facts of the situation. Here's what he's telling you and me, first of all. Yeah, there are people who want to hurt you and destroy you.

There are people who want to hurt you and destroy you. Now, when I say words like that, I can't help but feel a little paranoid.

Right? It sounds silly to say, hey, there's people who want to hurt me and destroy me when I've got a bunch of friendly faces staring at me. There's millions of Christians here in Canada who are able to gather on Sunday mornings without worrying that there are spies among us, without worrying that an angry mob is going to show up and burn this building down with us inside it, without worrying that angry family members are going to kidnap us, without worrying that a hostile government is going to gather us up and execute us one by one.

That's not happening right now. There are many millions of our brothers and sisters around the world. That is happening for them right now. In India and Iran, North Korea, parts of China, Eritrea and Egypt, people are hiding because otherwise they suffer and die for the sake of the Lord Jesus.

[18 : 23] And he knows there are people who want to hurt them and people who want to destroy them. Even apart from persecution for our faith, some of you have experienced all sorts of harm at the hands of other people.

There are some who suffered abuse as a child, physically, sexually, verbally. Some experience it as an adult.

Maybe you've had people manipulate you, deceive you, threaten you, steal from you. Maybe you live in terror of a person who is close to you, someone who is every day finding ways to hurt you and destroy you.

Maybe you've gone through that. Maybe you're going through that now. Maybe it happened in your past and it was such a terrible and vivid experience that now you look around and it feels like everyone's doing that to you, even if they're not.

I want to say to you, first of all, this is what God gave the church for. He has brought you here to protect you from this sort of harm. If you're in an abusive relationship, that's something that we take seriously as elders of our church.

[19 : 37] God has given us to you for this very reason and He's given you the civic authorities to respond to these sorts of things. There are many other things we could say about persecution and abuse.

God has many things to say about this in the Bible. And I say that because what Jesus is about to say, it's not all that needs to be said.

About people who want to hurt you and destroy you. There is more that God's Word says. But Jesus knows, here's what His disciples need to hear right now. This very counterintuitive approach

that's going to help them.

In verses 4 and 5, He says, I tell you, my friends, do not fear those who kill the body and after that have nothing more that they can do. But I will warn you whom to fear.

Fear Him who, after He is killed, has authority to cast into hell. Yes, I tell you, fear Him. Now you want to talk about confronting the brutal facts, okay?

[20 : 37] Jesus is saying to His disciples, do you think that you are in great danger right now? You must realize you are actually in far greater danger than you could ever imagine.

Yes, those religious leaders you're really frightened of, they can kill your body, but they can't touch your soul. Their threats only go so far. However, God has authority not only to kill the body, but to throw you body and soul into hell.

Jesus says that there, yeah, there are people who want to hurt you and destroy you, but the greatest danger is what lies beyond death. The greatest danger is what lies beyond death.

You can't confront the brutal facts any better than giving a mini-sermon on the danger of hell. That's what Jesus does. Jesus is not afraid to shy away from the subject of hell.

He speaks about hell more explicitly and more often than any other person in the Bible. And our culture finds that, the concept of hell to be offensive, hateful, nasty, evil, unjust.

[21 : 50] We think it contradicts the loving character of God. We have a very simplistic idea of God in our culture, almost a childish idea of God, that He's all love and indulgence.

And that's all there is to say about Him. And so we're convinced that hell is a subject that you should never bring up in polite conversation, or frankly, any conversation for that matter.

But Jesus doesn't think that way. Jesus is convinced of the reality of hell. He's convinced of the reality of eternal punishment, eternal separation from the goodness and kindness of God that we experience every day, even if we don't realize it.

His goodness and kindness that we take for granted, that we walk outside and the sun is shining and the air is warm and we experience all this beauty and a lovely day, and we just assume, well, I must deserve it.

No. That's God's patience and His kindness being given to us every single day, pouring down on us day after day after day. But there's a time limit because God is a patient God, not an indulgent God.

[22 : 59] Jesus firmly believes that our sins against God are so tremendous, so immense, so bad, that God must respond, as we saw in Revelation chapter 21, by driving out of His wonderful and perfect kingdom.

He has to rid it of everyone who will not repent of their sinful way of life. That's the way Jesus thinks. And here's why Jesus brings up that subject of hell, because He knows that's exactly what His disciples need right now to overcome their fear.

And that, I think, is astonishing. Because so many preachers have bullied and badgered and manipulated their people with the threat of hell.

A good old fire and brimstone sermon to emotionally manipulate people into making a decision for Christ without realizing what they're doing. or getting, taking control of people and making them do what the preacher wants.

But I don't think I've ever heard anyone preach the doctrine of hell out of a desire to rescue people from fear. That's exactly what Jesus is doing. It's so funny.

[24 : 12] He's preaching on hell so that you will be less afraid. Jesus knows that sometimes you have to fight fire with fire. And in this case, fight fear with fear.

The way you drive out a fear is you show that actually there's a greater fear. Actually, what you were afraid of, there's something bigger to shift your attention to.

And do you see that pattern in Jesus' words? In verse 4, Jesus starts by saying, do not fear. And then in verse 5, He says, fear three times. And then in verse 7, fear not.

Jesus knows that we are all afraid of something. We are all afraid of something or someone. The fingerprints of fear are all over our lives, often in very subtle ways that we don't even notice.

We're always worrying about the right words to say to people, worrying about what people may say to us or do to us, worrying about how they could see us, worrying about how someone could hurt us.

[25 : 15] And if you're not, there's going to come a time when you will. And Jesus says, the only way to stop worrying and fearing is to find something or someone greater to fear.

That's why He says, I will warn you whom to fear. Fear Him, who after He is killed, has authority to cast into hell. Yes, I tell you, fear Him. There is no mistaking this.

Jesus wants you and me to fear God. He wants us to be overwhelmed in our heads and in our hearts by God's authority, overwhelmed by His significance, how big He is.

He wants all of our thoughts to be captured by God, just like the sun has captured the planets of our solar system in its gravity so that they revolve around it. Jesus wants our knowledge of God to captivate us and control us.

The sheer gravity of God, the one who made the heavens and the earth, the one who alone has the right to judge the living and the dead and one day will exercise that right. You see, that is Jesus' secret.

[26 : 31] That is why Jesus is so fearless when people want to hurt Him or destroy Him. When people around Him cower and melt away, Jesus is not afraid to be hurt.

He is not afraid to be harmed because Jesus fears God His Father. And because of that, He doesn't fear other people. Even His opponents admit this.

He isn't controlled by other people. He isn't appeasing other people. He isn't longing for their approval. He's not freaking out that they could hurt Him. Jesus has broken those handcuffs of fear and so now His hands are free to draw His disciples in and to love them.

The fear of God empowers you to cast off fear and replace it with a heart of love. What if all that energy that went into all that anxiety could now be released to love people, to draw near?

And this is where we see the tenderness of Jesus Christ, where we see His gentleness, His kindness, how even though under threat of being hurt and being harmed, He can bring His disciples in and say the gentlest and kindest things to them.

[27 : 51] When we hear about a God who has authority to cast you or me into hell, it's easy to wonder, okay, well that's, yeah, okay, I understand. That's more terrifying. That's bigger. That's a greater threat.

But that's scary. That doesn't come from me at all. What if this God doesn't care about me? Why would He care about a wretched little worm like me?

Couldn't He just flick me into hell the way you flick an ant off your hand? Well, Jesus tells you that is not the way that God thinks about His children. That's not how He thinks about us.

Here's what He tells you and me in verses 6 and 7. Are not five sparrows sold for two pennies? And not one of them is forgotten before God.

Why? Even the hairs of your head are all numbered. Fear not. You are of more value than many sparrows. Now these are some of my favorite verses in the Bible.

[28 : 51] I just love how, I mean, Jesus is always this way. So down to earth, so concrete, and yet so vivid. You know, a lot of times when we talk about God's love, when we sing about God's love, we use kind of these grand terms that are also kind of nebulous and like, okay, we're using these big metaphors.

Oh, the love of God is so big. And we struggle. Like, how does that connect with my daily life?

Okay, okay, God is floating up there in the sky, loving, just floating around with love.

Okay. What does that mean? Well, verses like these are precious because they show what that means. They show the heart of God. They show what it looks like for God to really be that full of love.

Here, Jesus says that God loves sparrows. That's what this means. When was the last time that you paid attention to a sparrow?

Okay. When was the, maybe the last time that you paid attention was when a sparrow woke you up at five in the morning because it was chirping right outside your bedroom window. Okay. And you were not thinking very kindly of that sparrow.

[29 : 59] You were not loving that sparrow in that moment, I bet. Okay. The most common sparrows, the ones that Jesus is probably thinking of are house sparrows. And these are sparrows that just kind of hang around the borders of our town and they make little nests above the Tim Hortons entrance and people walk underneath and nobody even notices they're there.

They're dull little brown birds. They've got a boring little chirp. Nobody notices them. Nobody thinks about them. They just blend into the hedges and trees and telephone poles.

They're around. If you were to add up all the minutes of your life that you thought about those little house sparrows, how many minutes would that be?

Five minutes? Ten minutes total in your life that you've ever thought about them? God thinks about sparrows. God really likes sparrows.

Jesus says, even in his day, kids could catch five sparrows and people would only pay two pennies for them. Nobody cares. But God never forgets sparrows. He thinks about them endlessly.

[31:06] But this means, at every, you realize, every moment in time, God is thinking about sparrows. All the time. Like all of the sparrows. Not just the one you saw yesterday.

He's thinking about all of them. Not one of them ever leaves his mind even for a moment. They're drab little birds. You can buy them for a nickel. But God loves them. He has put more thought into sparrows in the last five minutes than all of us in our entire lives combined.

The next time you see a little sparrow hopping around, chirping, doing its little sparrow things, Jesus invites you to think, God is thinking about that sparrow right now. He is attentive and he really loves that little sparrow.

Maybe for just a moment, hey, maybe you'll love that sparrow too for a moment, right? If you look at it with the eyes of God. And then lift up your eyes, look at the people around you and think, you are of more value.

You are of more value than many sparrows. And look in the mirror, oh Christian, and tell yourself Jesus' words, fear not, you are of more value to your Father in Heaven than many sparrows.

[32:13] Because for every thought God has about sparrows, he has a thousand thoughts about you. Jesus tells us that even the hairs on your head are numbered.

I have a lot fewer hairs in my head than I used to. At least I have a beard. That counts for something, right? That's my head. I have fewer hairs in my beard than I used to have in my head, but I still have no idea how many hairs are in my beard.

I've never counted it. I don't think about my beard a lot. I forget about it most of the day. But God thinks about every single hair on my head all the time.

He sees it when one of my graying beard hairs falls out in the shower. I don't even notice, but he knows. And he's always thinking about each and every hair. It never escapes his mind.

He never forgets. He never loses sight. And that makes me think of Psalm 139 and verses 17 and 18. King David, the poet, writes, How precious to me are your thoughts, O God!

[33:24] How vast is the sum of them! If I would count them, they are more than the sand. Now up to this point, it's helpful to know the context. In Psalm 139, the entire Psalm is talking about how much the Lord is attentive and thinking about David, his servant, at all times.

How much he is with David at all times. How he is forming him, preparing him, and caring for him at all times. So David isn't just talking about, oh, just God's thoughts. God just thinks a lot of things. He's not talking about God's thoughts in general. He's talking about God's thoughts of him. How vast is the sum of God's thoughts of David. If you and I, maybe if we were to paraphrase these verses, here's how we might put it.

How precious it is to me that you are thinking of me, oh God. How enormous is the number of things you think about me. If I would try to count your thoughts on me one by one, they are more than all the grains of sand on all the shores of the world.

So, I don't care how self-obsessed and self-absorbed you are. You can't outdo God. He thinks more about you than you ever will. I would actually encourage you. That's why you probably can think a little bit less about yourself.

[34:40] Because God's got that covered. You can put your eyes on Jesus. Jesus lives every moment with the knowledge that this is the love the Father has for him.

You realize that Jesus, this is how he feels every moment. that God's thoughts for him are beyond counting. That his Father is attentive to him.

That he loves and values him. Jesus is living that experience every moment. That's his secret.

That's just, that's what empowers him. That's what feeds him.

And for every Christian, Jesus wants you to remember that Father, his Father is your Father too. that God has endless thoughts of you for your good.

Now that is why fearing God is such a liberating thing. To know that a God that big, a God that endlessly attentive is attentive for your good.

[35:44] Sure, there have been people who want to hurt you and destroy you. Maybe there still are. But the greatest danger is what lies beyond the grave. So fear God who treasures you.

Fear God who treasures you. The God who can cast, who has authority to cast people into hell, that's the level of authority and power and judgment that he has, is also a God who likes sparrows. And he likes you even better. He will never leave you. He will never abandon you. he will never ever stop thinking about you for even half a second.

That is why Jesus is able to speak with such confidence and courage and wisdom because he knows the love that his Father has for him. And he says that for every Christian, God loves you with that same attentive love even when we are afraid of being hurt.

For those of you who are Christians, all of this is something that I can say to you with confidence and with assurance. If you believe that Christ Jesus is Savior and Lord of all, if you've repented of living your own way and turned from your sin against God, if you trust only in the death and resurrection of Jesus Christ, if you only trust his goodness, his righteousness, their, the way that you are accepted into God's family, if you believe that Jesus is the one who holds you out of hell and welcomes you into the kingdom of heaven, if all these things are true, then consider what Jesus is saying and you will find as you come bit by bit to believe it, then you are not afraid to be hurt.

[37 : 34] For some of you, you don't know yet what it's like to relate to God this way. You only know indifference towards God or uneasiness or maybe terror.

Let me ask you, do you want to know what Jesus has with his Father? Do you want to know what it is like to live with a God who has authority to cast people in hell and yet to find deep comfort in his attentiveness, to be at peace with God, to be reconciled with God?

Do you want his son Jesus to call you friend like he called his own disciples? Do you want to fear God and so be freed from the dominating power of fear in your life?

Please come speak to me or to one of the other elders after the service. We would love to listen to what you're thinking, to where you're at, to pray with you, to help you.

Let me pray for us now. Our God and our Father, these things are true of you. We need all of you, God, not just the parts that are presentable to our culture, not the parts that are acceptable, that feel safe, that put us at ease, but also the parts that make us uncomfortable.

[39 : 02] The attributes of you and the things you do that make, that trouble us because often, Lord, we realize, we come to know that those are the parts that actually we need the most.

We need a God who has authority to cast into hell. Without that, we don't have a God that can be feared. Without that, we live in fear of other people. Oh, Lord God, turn our hearts to you.

Teach us this kind of fear, not a slavish fear where we're cowering in terror before you, but a filial fear where we know that our God loves us.

That God is big and people are small. That he is good even when they are not. That he is with us. Even if all else may may may may may may may may!

to see it. Amen.