

# The Fear of the Lord Teaches Wisdom

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Preacher: Dave Nannery

[ 0 : 0 0 ] Okay. Well, we've already wished a happy Mother's Day to all of you who are moms. And on this Mother's Day, it's really important for you moms to have the best Mother's Day of your life.

And so we want to pose this question to everybody here who has a mom. We want to pose this question, how do I make my mom happy? How do I make my mom happy?

And maybe you're thinking that the answer is, if you're younger, your answer is, I need to make mom breakfast in bed. Or at any age, you're thinking, I can give my mom a card, I can give her chocolates, I can find flowers that aren't going to make her sneeze.

And those are all really nice. Those are nice things. But if you really want to make your mom happy, then what you want to do is you want to get some advice from the Old Testament book of Proverbs in the Bible.

So if you were to turn to the book of Proverbs with the question, how do I make my mom happy? Well, the answer that you're going to get from the book of Proverbs is very consistent.

[ 1 : 0 8 ] So for example, if you were to turn to Proverbs chapter 23, you'd read there these words of wisdom. So if you're like me, you want to be as efficient as possible in your gift giving.

You want to give the best gift possible with as little effort as possible because you're romantic like that. So if you want to double up on your Mother's Day gift and your Father's Day gift in the same one, you can make both mom and dad happy by heeding this counsel from Proverbs chapter 23.

If you become a wise daughter or son, your mom or dad will, generally speaking, be happy.

Now that's the best Mother's Day gift that you and I can give. We can acquire wisdom for ourselves. This means that we today have the potential for the best Mother's Day ever here in our church.

And that's great news because not only will this gift make mom and dad happy, this is a blessing not only for mom, not only for dad, but this is something that will make you happy as well.

[ 2 : 4 9 ] Now if you don't believe me on that, if you don't believe that getting wisdom, acquiring wisdom will make you happy, then turn to Proverbs chapter 15, verses 30 through 33.

If you're holding one of the blue Bibles that our usher's handout, that's on page 539, Proverbs chapter 15, verses 30 through 33. And what these verses are going to do is they are going to teach us how to be happy.

Now last week we learned that one of the biggest sources of misery in our lives is the fear of man. That's what the Bible calls it, the fear of man. The fear that people will see me, people will harm me, or people will reject me.

We talked about that specifically last week, how that plays out in our lives in often surprising and unexpected ways. How the fear of man lays a snare that is concealed.

It looks normal. Everybody else thinks this way. It's enticing. Other people seem to offer things that we want, but it's also paralyzing.

[ 4 : 0 0 ] It cripples us in our mission and our purpose as human beings, as Christians. And we learned last week that Jesus Christ's way of overcoming the fear of man, the only way of truly overcoming the fear of man, was overcoming it with the fear of the Lord.

That's where we left off last week. At the time, though, we didn't explain why. We didn't explain how this works. And maybe you're coming back with this question, well, why should I fear the Lord?

Why should I fear the Lord? How will the fear of the Lord overcome the fear of man? How does that work? Well, here's what Proverbs 15, verses 30 through 33 says.

The light of the eyes rejoices the heart and good news refreshes the bones. The ear that listens to life-giving reproof will dwell among the wise.

Whoever ignores instruction despises himself, but he who listens to reproof gains intelligence. The fear of the Lord is instruction in wisdom and humility comes before honor.

[ 5 : 1 3 ] Now, there's a progression of thought in these verses. There's, I like to think of this as sort of a breadcrumb trail that leads us to happiness.

In verse 30, it promises good news that refreshes the bones. And I personally really enjoy the King James Version's rendering of that second line, a very literal rendering of it.

A good report, maketh the bones fat. So this, you've got this bright-eyed messenger coming into town because you don't, you don't get the news on your TV, you don't get the news on your smartphone in that day and age.

You get it from some sort of messenger coming into town with news and his eyes are all lit up with this amazing, bone-fattening, good news.

And what sort of news is it? Well, the next breadcrumb in the trail is verse 31. Verse 31 calls the good news life-giving reproof.

[ 6 : 1 1 ] Life-giving reproof. That's a bit of a twist. That seems contrary to our experience because to you and to me, being rebuked, being reproofed, being corrected, that feels a lot more like death to us than life.

And yet this verse says that the person who doesn't shut down, the person who doesn't get defensive, the person who doesn't flare up in anger when being rebuked or corrected or reproofed, the person who instead listens carefully, evaluates, considers the life-giving reproof, is a person who will be at home among the wise.

And so this breadcrumb trail has led us here and it continues into verse 32 with a warning. Whoever ignores instruction, despises himself. But he who listens to reproof gains intelligence.

So if you want the good life for yourself, what you'll do is you will hear instruction, you will listen to reproof because it is going to make you wise.

It is going to give you understanding. And therefore, it is going to make you happy and healthy. But if what you do instead is you dismiss or you ignore someone who calls you out or someone who rebukes you or you just shut down or you get defensive or you blow up in anger, then what this verse is saying is that literally you despise yourself.

[ 7 : 5 0 ] You hate yourself. God is telling you that even if you don't feel like you're a self-loathing, self-hating individual, that is what you are. You hate yourself. You're bringing ruin to yourself.

And mom doesn't want that for you. Your mom doesn't want that. The Lord doesn't want that for you. Your brothers and sisters in Christ here in this room, they don't want that for you.

And so the Lord is urging you and he's urging me today, choose wisdom and life. Choose happiness and health. And so the breadcrumb trail leads us to verse 33, to the conclusion, where the Lord shows us where this wisdom is found, where wise people learn this bone-fattening good news, this life-giving reproof.

Verse 33, the fear of the Lord is instruction in wisdom and humility comes before honor. wise men and wise women embrace this painful but refreshing humility of fearing the Lord.

It's painful but refreshing. It's like being in a sauna for half an hour and then running out and jumping into a frigid mountain lake. For some of you, that's not exactly the way you'd like to spend your holidays.

[ 9 : 12 ] But if you do that, as painful as it is, you're going to come out of that feeling alive like never before, refreshed. That's what fearing the Lord is like. Now what does it mean to fear the Lord?

What exactly is that? Well, last week we learned that fear, fear is a natural part of the human experience. The Bible uses the word fear in a very general, very broad way.

It describes a very wide range of human experiences. Anything from panic, horror, terror, worry, anxiety, trembling, awe, wonder, devotion, reverence, admiration, respect.

So broadly defined, you know, as we try to, how do we capture that huge range of experiences in one definition? And this is perhaps a very limited definition, but broadly defined, the experience of fear is the inescapable sense that someone or something else is great in power or significance.

Someone or something else is great in power or significance. You will always fear someone or something. You always will. Everyone does. You and I, as human beings, we are made to fear.

[ 10 : 29 ] Fear is inescapable. We have to do it. We're supposed to do it. And last week, we learned that our tendency as sinful human beings is to fear the creature rather than the creator.

To fear other people instead of fearing the Lord. And so we treat other people as the ultimate source of or ultimate threat to security, favor, or justice.

Other people become our ultimate source of or ultimate threat to security, favor, or justice. and modern psychologists have developed dozens of labels for this.

Labels that are multiplying with each passing year of what this looks like in real life. How this messes us up so badly. The Bible simply calls this the fear of man.

That's the scriptural label for it. And last week, we learned how it plays out in our lives in concrete and specific ways. And we began the road to recovery from the fear of man by learning that you have to fight fear with fear.

[ 11 : 37 ] You overcome the fear of man by learning the fear of the Lord. You have to learn to believe and to know and to feel that the Lord is great.

The Lord alone is great in power and significance. That He is the ultimate source of all security, favor, and justice. So how does the fear of the Lord overcome the fear of man?

How does that actually work? Well, we just read Proverbs 15 verse 33 which tells us that the fear of the Lord is instruction in wisdom.

So let's start there. I've included in your bulletin there's a working definition of wisdom that I've cobbled together from a couple of different sources. wisdom is the ability to direct one's mind toward a full understanding of human life, toward its moral fulfillment, and toward the practical skills necessary for its fulfillment.

Wisdom is the ability to direct one's mind toward a full understanding of human life, toward its moral fulfillment, and toward the practical skills necessary for its fulfillment.

[ 12 : 52 ] So, in other words, wisdom is your ability to understand who you are, the mission and purpose God made you for.

So, in other words, wisdom is your ability to understand who you are and who you were made to be, what you're here for. But not only that, but also how to live in harmony with God's created order, how to live in harmony with God's creation and the order that he's made it in, so that you can accomplish your God-given mission and purpose.

So, if you ever find yourself wondering, who am I really? Who am I? What am I here for? What am I supposed to be doing? And how do I get there?

What are practical ways I do this? Well, that's what wisdom is for. If the fear of the Lord is instruction in this wisdom, this wisdom that we all long for, then without the fear of the Lord, what that means is that you and I, without the fear of the Lord, cannot be truly wise.

We won't know who we are. We won't know what we're meant to be, what we're here for. We won't know how to get there. To develop wisdom, you and I have to develop the inescapable sense that God alone is great in power and significance.

[ 14 : 09 ] And that is why this saying that we've just read, it occurs over and over again in the wisdom literature of the Bible, in Job, in the Psalms, in the Proverbs.

The fear of the Lord is the beginning of wisdom. That's the refrain that's repeated over and over. The fear of the Lord is the beginning of wisdom. So why should I fear the Lord? Why?

Because the fear of the Lord teaches happy, healthy, life-giving wisdom that overcomes the fear of man.

So learning the fear of the Lord, that is the best present you can get your mom for Mother's Day. Now next week we're going to learn more about how the fear of the Lord is an attractive, life-giving experience.

Just the joy of it. This week what we're going to do is we're going to focus more on how you and I, how we go about developing the fear of the Lord. We're going to identify obstacles, roadblocks, that have prevented us from developing the fear of the Lord.

[ 15 : 24 ] And then we're going to learn how we go about developing it in real life. But first we must understand how the fear of the Lord actually teaches wisdom.

We have to know how this works. And for this I was very helped by the preacher John Piper who has this marvelous illustration he uses. This illustration of our solar system.

The solar system is this harmonious system of planets and moons that are orbiting a central star, the sun. Now as you study the solar system you start to realize some pretty remarkable facts.

One is that the sun is unbelievably massive. It contains 99.8% of the mass of the solar system. The sun is this object of unimaginable glory and brightness and unimaginable gravity.

And its gravity is what maintains order among the planets, the moons, all the little rocks that are traveling around the solar system in their proper order. And so the sun governs and gives life to our solar system.

[ 16 : 32 ] Now what would happen if you were somehow able to make the sun disappear? It just vanished into thin, I was about to say thin air, but there's no air in space.

If you were just to make the sun completely disappear from existence, if you were to replace it with one of the planets, what would happen to the solar system?

Well it would entirely disintegrate. The planets would just all fly apart. Their trajectories would take them far apart from one another or perhaps they might smash into one another. All life would be extinguished.

And so it is with the Lord. When we fear the Lord, the Lord is the one at the center of the solar system. He is the one giving order and life to us and through us.

And the other people in our lives, they're like the fellow planets in the system. And we maintain a proper orbit and relationship with them. That's the way of wisdom. Because we live in a fallen world, it doesn't always work, but generally it does.

[ 17 : 33 ] Generally it makes life much better for us. We live happier and healthy lives. But when we try to remove the Lord from his rightful place, when we replace him with one of those planets, we take one of those planets out of their place, kick the sun out of the way, put the planet there in the center.

When we fear other people, rather than fearing the Lord, everything falls apart. Either things slowly die out as the planets drift apart.

The system collapses or they smash into each other. Conflict erupts. We introduce disorder. We introduce chaos, sin and death into our relationships with one another.

So by abandoning the fear of the Lord, we abandon his wisdom. We abandon the good life that he wants for us. This life-giving order of wisdom. Now the world and the culture around us knows that the fear of man is a problem.

It recognizes it. It doesn't always use the term the fear of man, but it knows, hey, we shouldn't be controlled by other people and what they think. But the problem is the world offers solutions.

[ 18 : 44 ] Our culture offers solutions to this problem that don't actually solve the problem. In fact, they only make it worse. The world tells you, yeah, you can dig yourself out of the quicksand.

Just keep struggling. It'll get better. It doesn't get better. It makes it worse. You sink deeper. The world provides us with alternative wisdom, with counterfeit learning that will ensure that we remain enslaved and ensnared by the fear of man.

And so now that we've answered the question, why should I learn the fear of the Lord, we have to clear the path before us. Clear it of alternative wisdom that's going to lead us astray.

We have to start asking ourselves, what counterfeit learning have I absorbed from our culture? What counterfeit learning have I absorbed from our culture?

So to answer this question, turn with me to Luke chapter 11, verse 53. We're going to look at Luke 11, verse 53 through chapter 12, verse 12.

[ 19 : 47 ] Now that'll be on pages 870 through 871 in the Blue Bibles. Now Luke 11, 53 through 12, verse 12. We looked at this passage last week to identify the three fears that make up the fear of man.

And the three fears that Jesus identifies are these. First, people will see me. Second, people will harm me. Third, people will reject me.

And so as we re-examine these verses, we will gain insight from Jesus about the counterfeit learning that you and I have absorbed from our culture.

So first, in chapter 11, verses 53 and 54, Jesus identifies that first fear, the fear that people will see me. Jesus has, as you might discover if you look back at chapter 11, Jesus has earned the hatred of the scribes and the Pharisees, these Jewish religious leaders who want to bring him down.

And they plan to bring Jesus down by exposing him as a false teacher, as a heretic, as a fraud. They're setting traps, lying in wait for him to catch him in something he might say, provoking him to talk.

[ 21 : 02 ] The more words he uses, the more likely that they can get him or his disciples to say the wrong thing. They want to show people what Jesus and his disciples are really like, that they're really frauds.

And so the disciples, they must have been tempted to protect themselves from these religious leaders. And one of the ways that they could do that is by putting up a false front of righteousness. If you feel like I'm like this cake that has rotted away on the inside, well, maybe one way I can hide that is by slathering a thick layer of icing all over it.

By doing and saying all the things that would make me look praiseworthy, that would make me look good in public. But Jesus warns them about that in chapter 12, verse 1. He says to his disciples, Beware of the leaven of the Pharisees, which is hypocrisy.

It's hypocrisy. This thing that's going to contaminate you. And the word hypocrisy simply means being an actor. It means acting righteous without being righteous.

Hypocrisy means that you convince everyone else, and very likely you convince yourself that you really are righteous. That's the first counterfeit learning that we've absorbed from our culture.

[ 22 : 28 ] The wisdom of fake righteousness. The wisdom of fake righteousness. This is our culture's way of coping with that first fear, that fear that people will see me.

This is its defense mechanism it offers. The wisdom of fake righteousness responds to this fear by telling you, you have nothing to be ashamed of. You have nothing to be ashamed of.

And so the Pharisees, they employed fake righteousness. They did it by surrounding the law of Moses with their own codes of rules and regulations about washings and about tithings.

Then they would adhere to all of these human traditions. And they would pick and choose the laws that were the easiest to keep and that they could hold up and show other people, look, I'm righteous.

I'm keeping all of these things. But all these man-made laws they're inventing and they're following, they do it so they can look good in front of other people.

[ 23 : 24 ] It works in their favor. This way, these rules they invent that give them a sense of righteousness, this way they can't be seen, they can't be exposed for the shameful evil inside of them.

And so in Luke chapter 11, Jesus, at a dinner party that he's invited to, he calls them all out on this in public.

He calls them out for listening to the wisdom of fake righteousness, for inventing their own way of being righteous. They were doing it to tell themselves, you have nothing to be ashamed of.

Now, 2,000 years later, this defense mechanism hasn't changed. The conventional wisdom of the world hasn't changed. Now, we've adopted a little bit of a different way to implement it.

Our culture would look at this ridiculously fastidious legal code of the Pharisees. We would mock it and laugh at it, because we've found our own newer and better way of repeating this error.

[ 24 : 22 ] We found a way that makes sense to us. So in our culture, we simply throw out, we don't surround God's law with a bunch of human regulations. What we do is we throw it out.

And we replace it with human regulations entirely. We have our own man-made codes of conduct. And these codes of conduct, they make a lot of sense to us. They make just as much sense to us as the Pharisees' laws made to them.

We feel just as righteous about ourselves as the Pharisees felt about themselves. And so when we worry that people will see me, when that worry starts to creep up, we comfort ourselves with the wisdom of fake righteousness that says, you have nothing to be ashamed of.

And so we say to ourselves, you know, I'm a pretty good person by my culture standards. I'm not a jerk like my bosses. People who are nice and not jerks.

That's how you be righteous. I'm not a shrew like my mother-in-law. I'm not a pervert like the guy I saw in the evening news. And so we tell ourselves that we're good enough.

[ 25 : 25 ] As long as we satisfy our culture's values, as long as we satisfy our social norms, we're good enough. We've got nothing to be ashamed of. And so the theologian John Calvin warns us with these words. Since we are all naturally prone to hypocrisy, since we are all naturally prone to hypocrisy, that's our tendency, that's our nature, any empty semblance of righteousness, anything that looks like righteousness, is quite enough to satisfy us instead of righteousness itself.

We settle for the counterfeit. In other words, we readily accept fake righteousness because it makes us feel acceptable before other people. We settle for something less than the real thing.

But Jesus flat refuses to let us get away with it. Jesus doesn't mince words. He gives us the wisdom of true righteousness in Luke 12 verses 2 and 3 when he says, 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. So in other words, Jesus is saying this, Other people, their righteous standards, that is the least of your concern.

You ought to be worried about God Almighty. God Almighty who uncovers everything, whose eyes pierce you to the heart. The God who judges you by his righteous standard.

[ 27 : 05 ] The God who will one day publicly expose you and all that you have said and all that you have done and all that you have carefully concealed. He's going to do that to you.

The fear of the Lord shatters the counterfeit learning from our culture, the wisdom of fake righteousness. Because it's only real righteousness that matters in the eyes of the Lord.

Now as to that second fear, the one that says, People will harm me. People will harm me. We've absorbed counterfeit learning from our culture on this matter as well.

Now our culture teaches us how to cope with this sort of fear. It has a defense mechanism for this. It offers us the wisdom of self-preservation. The wisdom of self-preservation.

And that's what Jesus warns against in Luke chapter 12 verses 4 through 7. Because Jesus knows that his disciples are going to be tempted to do whatever it takes.

[ 28 : 10 ] Whatever it takes to protect themselves from being hurt by Jesus' enemies. Jesus knows that his disciples are going to be threatened with abusive words, with bodily harm, with death.

That's exactly what is going to happen. You keep reading the Gospel of Luke. The disciples are going to run into that test and they are going to fail the test. Because they follow our culture's wisdom.

The wisdom of self-preservation. That tells you and me the same things that were told to the disciples. You must protect yourself at all costs. You must protect yourself at all costs.

Do anything. Say anything. To protect yourself from other people who might bring suffering, who might bring hardship into your life. And as a result, you lock out of your life, not only do you lock out of your life genuine threats to your safety, you also lock out of your life anyone who even feels like a threat to your safety.

You become incapable of hearing someone who says things that make you feel uneasy or threatened.

- [ 29 : 26 ] This renders you and me not only unable to listen to instruction, it also renders you and me unable to love the unlovely and the unlovable. We become like the priest and the Levite in the parable of the Good Samaritan.

We become well-meaning people who scurry past risky and difficult individuals who need our help. Why? Because you must protect yourself at all costs.

Now before I go any further, I want to make this clear because this is something where there's a lot of potential for misunderstanding. What I'm not saying is I'm not saying that loving other people means you become a doormat.

I'm not saying that loving other people means you let other people use, abuse, manipulate you. Next week we're going to talk about what real love looks like.

Our culture has such a messed up understanding of love. Real biblical love doesn't look like that. What I'm saying here is that mere self-preservation, it's a coping mechanism promoted by our culture.

- [ 30 : 36 ] It's counterfeit wisdom. God's way is so much wiser, so much better, so much more life-giving. But it's also a lot scarier because the fear of the Lord teaches you and me that there is actually a much greater threat.

There's a greater threat to our security than we can even begin to imagine, than we can dare to imagine. And here is how Jesus explains it. Remember, Jesus doesn't mince words.

Jesus doesn't shy away from this. Verses 4-7. I tell you, my friends, do not fear those who kill the body.

And after that, I 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.

And what we learn here is that Jesus believes in hell. Jesus believes in eternal damnation.

- [ 31 : 41 ] Jesus believes in eternal punishment for everyone who promotes their own fake righteousness, for everyone who rejects him as Savior and Lord. In fact, Jesus, I don't know why people in our culture like Jesus because he values things they hate.

He values so many things that our culture thinks are despicable. Jesus spoke about hell more than any other person in the Bible. Jesus believes in a God who judges and who has authority to cast into hell.

Jesus believes in a God of wrath and promotes this God. Speaks of him. And Jesus is saying to you, I will warn you whom to fear.

Fear him. him. Yes, I tell you, fear him. So Jesus gives us the wisdom of, I guess you can call it this, maybe the problem is not that we want self-preservation.

Because Jesus gives us the wisdom of true self-preservation. Jesus says, if you really want to preserve yourself, if you really want to save yourself, then know that it is the Lord who can cast you, body and soul, into hell.

- [ 32 : 50 ] some of you don't believe that. And oh, what sorrow you will encounter when you find that every word Jesus has spoken was true.

And he pleaded with you, fear him. What's so amazing is that Jesus actually follows this up with words of some of the most gentle comfort that he has to offer.

Jesus actually believes that you and I are going to be comforted by the reality and by the threat of hell. That's so startling, so unexpected.



And what Jesus is saying is that if we behold, if we believe in a God who casts into hell, if we encounter this God, then that fear, people will harm you, that becomes the last thing on our mind.

That fear just disappears, becomes irrelevant, doesn't register anymore. But, if on the other hand, we deny the doctrine of hell, if we say, you know, I can't believe that a loving God would send someone to hell, I can't believe in a God like that.

[ 34 : 11 ] If we deny the fear of divine wrath, what we're going to do is we're going to replace the fear of divine wrath with the fear of human wrath, with the fear that people will harm me, with the crippling worldly wisdom of self-preservation.

Jesus heavily promotes the doctrine of hell because it is necessary for you and me to be fully human, to be the wise and fearless people that God made us to be.

And so our culture, it has taught us the wisdom of fake righteousness, the wisdom of self-preservation. And it shouldn't be a surprise to us then that our culture also has an answer to that third fear that we talked about last week, the third fear that people will reject me.

People will reject me. And our culture responds to this fear with yet another coping mechanism. the wisdom of affirmation, the wisdom of affirmation, and the worldly wisdom of affirmation says to us, you need other people to love and affirm you.

You need other people to love and affirm you. It's this word, not just want, but need.

[ 35 : 27 ] A desire that becomes a demand. In Jesus' disciples, they are worried that they will be rejected, but they will be denied by other people because of the claims Jesus is making about himself.

And because of the things that Jesus is saying and doing to back up those claims. And Jesus knows that his disciples, they are going to be tempted to deny him before other people.

They are going to be tempted to deny him in order not to be rejected. And that is why Jesus warns them in verses 8 through 12 not to deny him before men, not to blaspheme the Holy Spirit, not to be anxious about how you should defend yourself.

You and I, we are quick to think of ourselves as people who need other people to love and affirm us. the counselor, Ed Welch, he called himself a leaky love cup.

We're psychologically needy cups and we need other people to surround us and to pour their love and their affirmation into us until we're full and we feel, ah, we no longer feel empty inside, we feel satisfied with our love and now we can finally feel good about ourselves and now we can actually love other people but until other people love us first we can't do that.

[ 36 : 52 ] And of course our cups have a bit of a leak at the bottom. So if certain other people in my life don't love me, don't affirm me enough or don't love and affirm me in the way that meets my love language or don't love and affirm me the way that I demand that they do it, the love drains out of the cup.

I feel empty, I feel worthless, I feel unloved. We fear that people will reject me. So our culture comes alongside us and says, yes, yes, you need to get other people, not only do they have to, the other people need to stop ridiculing you, stop rejecting you, stop ostracizing you, you need to get other people to love you and affirm your identity and approve your decisions.

This is rampant in our culture. Whatever your opinion, maybe you come in here being a big fan of the gay pride parade that takes place every year in Vancouver, but don't you understand that is ground zero for the fear of man.

That is the ground zero for the fear that people will reject me. This idea that I not only can I not be rejected, but I must be celebrated. My lifestyle must be celebrated and affirmed and promoted and I demand that.

that's the world's wisdom. The wisdom of affirmation. But as we listen to that counsel, we are only going to sink deeper into the swamp of fear.

[ 38 : 26 ] We desperately need the affirmation, the approval, the love of other people. We will do just about anything to get it. The Lord Jesus Christ, He takes that worldly wisdom of affirmation and He turns it on His head because our culture says you need other people to love and affirm you and Jesus replies in verses 8-12, no.

No, you don't. You need the Almighty God to love and affirm you. Not to fill you up as a, fill up your empty cup of love. And the reality is if we fear the Lord, we're not even thinking about our empty cup anymore.

but we know we need the love of the Almighty God and we desperately long for His affirmation.

To those who fear rejection, Jesus says, your fear ought to be rejection before God, not before other people. The fear of the Lord teaches us that it is the Lord whose rejection is final.

So if other people don't love you, if other people don't approve you, other people don't affirm you, look, it'll still hurt. Other people do have some degree of power and significance. But you're not going to be devastated by it because the Lord is supreme in power and significance and it is His opinion of you that matters, not other people's.

[ 40 : 02 ] And so we've asked, what counterfeit learning have I absorbed from our culture? We've encountered the wisdom of fake righteousness, the wisdom of self-preservation, the wisdom of affirmation. And we've already seen how the fear of the Lord takes each of these counterfeit forms of wisdom and blows them apart.

And so now we ask the final and critical question that we need. How do I learn the fear of the Lord? How do I learn to fear the Lord? Well, if you came here this morning hoping that you were going to hear from a guy who's got it all figured out and can give you the ten steps, the ten ironclad foolproof steps to learning the fear of the Lord that he's learned from his own experience, having reached the fear of the Lord level ten, well, you are listening to the wrong preacher.

I'm not there. I'm learning it too. But God the Holy Spirit is a great instructor and we have his word. We've already learned a lot about fearing the Lord from hearing the words of Jesus in the Gospel of Luke.

Jesus has shown us a God who sees, a God who reveals, exposes all that we are and all that we do. A God who has authority to cast us body and soul into hell.

A God who acknowledges or denies us before angels and authorities and mulling over this truth, preoccupying our minds with the power and significance of a God like this.

[ 41 : 29 ] Beholding the Lord of glory will help greatly. And these words from Jesus, they send us back to another passage of scripture that can help us further.

Last week we discovered that in this funny pattern in Luke chapter 12 verses 4 through 7 where Jesus talks about fear in a very strange way. He says, if you look at his fear vocabulary he uses, Jesus says, do not fear, fear, fear, fear not.

And that looks like a contradiction if you're not reading carefully, if you're just skimming through. It looks like Jesus is in the same breath saying don't be afraid and also be afraid. That is not the first time in the Bible that we are told in the same breath both to fear and to fear not.

There is another encounter with the living God. This encounter with the living God occurs in Exodus chapter 20 verses 18 through 21. And you can find that on page 61 in your Blue Bibles.

Exodus chapter 20 verses 18 through 21. And here God has gathered the people of Israel at the foot of Mount Sinai in the desert to receive his law. Now this is a little bit of a sneak preview of a sermon later to come in a few weeks.

[ 42 : 50 ] So in a way this is kind of a cheat sheet. You get to hear it before we get there. But God has gathered the people of Israel at the foot of Mount Sinai in the desert to receive his law and God warns Moses the Lord warns Moses to tell the people of Israel not to touch the mountain not to touch Mount Sinai when he descends on it.

And it's pretty obvious when he comes. There's no mistaking when the Lord arrives because there is thunder there is lightning fire smoke the voice of the Lord like a loud trumpet and he speaks the ten commandments to the people of Israel.

And here's the response of the people in verses 18 through 21. Now when all the people saw the thunder and the flashes of lightning and the sound of the trumpet and the mountains smoking the people were afraid and trembled and they stood far off and said to Moses you speak to us and we will listen but do not let God speak to us lest we die.

Moses said to the people do not fear for God has come to test you that the fear of him may be before you that you may not sin.

The people stood far off while Moses drew near to the thick darkness where God was. So why are the people afraid?

[ 44 : 15 ] Verse 18 why are the people afraid? The source of the people's fear is what they experience is what they behold. It is the revelation of the glory of God.

God appears to them exercising the powerful forces of his created world with words of authority commanding them how they are to live. And the reason for their fear is at the beginning of verse 18.

All the people saw they see they behold they witness the power of God.

And so it is for us today. Until we encounter God in his word until the Holy Spirit opens our eyes to experience to behold his glory to see him for who he is until that happens we are never going to learn the fear of the Lord.

We are never going to fear the Lord. We will fear other people instead. People will seem big and God will seem small.

[ 45 : 21 ] John Calvin puts it this way Men are never duly touched and impressed with a conviction of their insignificance until they have contrasted themselves with the majesty of God.

Men are never duly touched and impressed with a conviction of their insignificance until they have contrasted themselves with the majesty of God. You don't realize that you and everyone else around you is really small until you first see that God is really big.

That's the people's reason for fear. That's the reason for fear. What is their response of fear? The response of fear is in verses 18 through 19 where we read the people were afraid and trembled and they stood far off and said to Moses you speak to us and we will listen but do not let God speak to us lest we die.

Now, what is good here? Let's delineate there's some good here and some not so good here. What is good here is that the people understand the Lord is not a safe God.

There is a certain danger in approaching his presence. He has power. He has holiness. And they're recognizing that God is great.

[ 46 : 43 ] He is very great. But what isn't good is this fear is more of a servile fear that they seem to have their cowering.

Moses warns them against this in verse 20 when he says do not fear because they perceive the Lord as purely dangerous and not as delightful.

They perceive his glory as a threat when it's actually a test. They perceive the Lord as great but not as good.

And that's what the test exposes. Their fear of the Lord perceives it's a one-dimensional fear. They see that God is great and they fear him but they don't see that he is good.

They're cowering before the Lord as slaves. They've still got that slave mindset. They're still cowering the way they cowered before their cruel and abusive master Pharaoh and they think that the Lord is like Pharaoh.

[ 47 : 43 ] But the Lord is calling you and me not to avoid him. Not to distance ourselves from him. He's calling you approach him. One of the New Testament authors reflects on these events in Hebrews chapter 12 and he tells us this.

You have not come to what may be touched. a blazing fire and darkness and gloom and a tempest and the sound of a trumpet and a voice whose words made the hearers beg that no further messages be spoken to them for they could not endure the order that was given if even a beast touches the mountain it shall be stoned.

Indeed so terrifying was the sight that Moses said I tremble with fear. But you have come to Mount Zion and to the city of the living God the heavenly Jerusalem and to innumerable angels and festal gathering and to the assembly of the firstborn who are enrolled in heaven and to God the judge of all and to the spirits of the righteous made perfect and to Jesus the mediator of a new covenant and to the sprinkled blood that speaks to a better word than the blood of Abel.

Under that old covenant the old covenant the people stood far off while Moses drew near to the thick darkness where God was. Verse 21 Under the new covenant we also have someone who draws near to God.

But we have a better mediator than Moses who went to God alone. Because you and I who believe in this Jesus in Jesus of Nazareth you and I who have believed in him trusted in his perfect and righteous life in his death for our sins his forgiveness that he gives and he provides for us his resurrection from the dead we who believe in Jesus have him as our mediator of a new covenant a new relationship who welcomes us to approach the throne of God with him to come with him because his blood speaks for us.

[ 49 : 59 ] And this is the solution to our fear. This is how we can fear the Lord and yet at the same time stride boldly into the presence of the Lord and know that we are welcomed by God the judge of all.

That we are welcomed by the judge. How do I learn to fear the Lord? This way. We behold the glory of God as we are beckoned into his presence by his son.

We behold the glory of God as we are beckoned into his presence by his son. And this is something that you have the opportunity to talk about in your growth groups and your families as you talk about this sermon.

Are there passages in scripture that reveal to you the power the significance of God that make your hair stand on end? Remind one another of this.

Direct each other to Jesus who beckons us into the presence of this great and good God. This new relationship that we have with the God whom we fear.

[ 51 : 15 ] That's what the hymn writer John Newton writes about in his hymn where he writes Great God from thee there's not concealed. Thou seest my inward frame.

To thee I always stand revealed exactly as I am. Since I can hardly therefore bear what in myself I see how vile and dark must I appear most holy God to thee.

But since my Savior stands between in garments dyed in blood tis he instead of me is seen when I approach to God.

Thus though a sinner I am safe he pleads before the throne his life and death in my behalf and calls my sins his own.

What wondrous love what mysteries in this appointment shine my breaches of the law are his and his obedience mine.

[ 52 : 22 ] We learn to fear the Lord when we behold the glory of God as we are beckoned into his presence by his Son. Amen. Amen. Amen. Amen.

Amen. Amen. Amen. Amen.