

Application

A. Friend, if I could somehow get you to think about what scares you today; if I could get you to name your fear, then together we would have discovered what is competing for God in your life. And I'm convinced that if you would give that over to God he would take away your fear. Jesus is the answer to your fear.

B. The first physician to die of AIDS in the United Kingdom was a young Christian. He had contracted AIDS while doing medical research in Zimbabwe. In the last days of his life he could barely communicate. It became almost impossible to express his thoughts to his wife. One day when she simply could not understand so he wrote the letter J on a note pad. She called out words; she ran through her medical dictionary, saying various words beginning with J. None was right. Then she said, "Jesus?"

That was the right word. He was with them. That was all either of them needed to know. And that is always enough – Jesus is enough.

C. At the bottom of your outline is a place on which I'm asking you to write your fear. What is your greatest fear? Would you give it to Jesus to day? Would you lay it at the foot of the cross where he died? Would you receive God's Unexpected Hope?

Please take that paper now. The choir is going to sing a song of celebration. And while the choir sings, I invite you to bring your fear to the cross. Fold it, crumple it, do something to symbolize that on Easter Sunday 2010, you gave your self and you gave your fear to Christ.

Prayer

Easter 2010

My greatest fear is _____

Today I

___ Accept God's unconditional love for me

___ Believe that Jesus Christ died and rose for me

___ Commit my fears and my life to Christ

I place my fear at the foot of the cross of the Resurrected Christ.

"To all who received him, to those who believed in his name, he gave the right to become children of God." John 1:12

"Unexpected Hope"
Matthew 28:1-10

4/04/10

RMBC
Pastor Dennis

Introduction

A. Have you notice that we're living in a season of fear right now? One study looked at 500 different people and discovered 7,000 different fears – that's an average of 14 fears per person.

B. I'm actually developing a new fear – fear of flying. It's sad because I love to fly and have flown around the world. For years I hummed that little jingle, "Fly the friendly skies of United." Now I sing, "Don't fly the crazy skies, you'll get divided." You may go to Boston but your bags go to Baton Rouge.

I used to trust pilots like people trusted George Washington. Don Beckenhauer (show pictures) was my hero. But now – why the other day a plane crashed and they found out it ran out of fuel. What pilot takes off without enough fuel – it's not like there are places up there to stop along the way – "Hey, I'd like a couple gallons of jet fuel." There aren't signs up there that say, "Last chance for gas – next station 250 miles."

Remember the pilots that overshot the airport by 100 miles over Minnesota? I know there are only 10,000 lakes in Minnesota but for goodness sake you don't just keep flying. The pilots are suspected of playing cards, calculating their retirement (which they just blew on that mistake) or drinking. It really bothered me the other day when I was on a plane and the flight attendant asked the guy next to me what he wanted to drink. He said, "I'll just have whatever the pilots are having."

Two pilots landed their commercial flight at the wrong airport in Kentucky. When they landed at Lexington the captain told the co-pilot, "Man, I thought this was Frankfurt." How do you miss your airport in state that only has two airports?

And the passengers are starting to make me nervous too. I find myself in the waiting area thinking, "I wonder which of those guys is a terrorist?" I was on a flight standing in the aisle waiting for the lavatory when the lady in front of me asked the flight attendant for a safety pin. I thought, well she has some major wardrobe malfunction. But when it was my turn I go in and find out she had pinned the curtain shut on the lavatory window. She was afraid someone on another plane would look in the window.

I knew things were bad when I received my itinerary for a flight. It said for cost saving the meal on this flight is a potluck. Rows 13-23 bring salads, 4-12 bring a main dish, and 1st class brings the desserts. I'm considering driving to more places now, and I have good biblical reason for that -- In Matthew 28:20 Jesus said, "And 'low' I am with you always."

C. Actually that is one of the answers to our fears – the great fact that God is always with us. Fear has a lot of names: worry, tension, anxiety, and stress. This is not some minor issue; it's absolutely critical because fear can get a vice-grip like hold on us. Fear can be contagious. It's limiting. It's draining. It can make life seem very dark. But that's where we meet the frightened women that first Easter. It was dark when the women came to the tomb looking for Jesus. It's always worse when you're afraid and it's dark. (Matthew 28:1-10)

Unexpected Hope

A. The Easter message is that Jesus takes away our fear. The angel said to those frightened women, "Don't be afraid." Jesus greeted them and then said, "Don't be afraid!" That's the unexpected hope of Easter. Unexpected hope is when the last thing you expect becomes a reality.

Who expected God to give Adam and Eve a second chance?

Who expected God to call Abram from Ur of the Chaldeans?

Who expected God to use Moses to free His people from bondage?

Who expected God to call David from the sheep pens, or Amos from the fig orchard, or Peter from the bait shop? But he did.

Who expected Jesus to be born to a peasant girl from Galilee?

Who expected him to die such a cruel death on a cross?

And no one in the world expected him to rise from the dead – But he did – and there in lies our hope; Unexpected Hope.

B. This morning I invite you to let God take your fears. There is not a person here that doesn't have a fear to face. Some of you live in fear of the future – you're afraid for our nation. Some of you live with an illness for which there is still no sure cure – you're afraid. Some of you live alone for one reason or another and it's frightening. Some of you have lost your job, or your source of income – the economy is down and unemployment is up; the stock market is up today but your retirement fund tanked last year. We have fears for our children and our aging parents; fears that our past will be found out and that our future won't work out.

Hope That Overcomes Fear

This morning I'm asking you to consider three things:

1. Accept God's love for you

"Where God's love is, there is no fear because God's perfect love drives out fear" (1 John 4:18). The Bible says the opposite of love is fear, and the opposite of fear is love. Love and fear can't operate together. They are like oil and water. When love comes in the front door of your life, fear goes out the back door. Love drives out fear.

In the Resurrection of Jesus we see the love of God. Jesus returned from death to prove to those he loved that God's love is real. God's love is the most powerful force in the world.

Our deepest need in life is to feel absolutely, totally, unconditionally loved – not for something we could be or should be, but loved just as we are. Every one of us feels that this morning. Until this issue is resolved, we will be tormented by our fears. Only God can love us with as much love as we really need.

God created you and me to be loved. Will you accept God's love for you? He knows everything about you and loves you as you are. When we accept God's love for us we can stop being afraid of a lot of things: being alone, failure, mistakes, losses. That's the good news of Easter: God loves you!

2. Believe that Jesus died and rose for you

It's one thing to believe about something; it's another thing to believe in something. It's one thing to believe about a person; it's another thing to believe in a person. A lot of people believe God is real. But believing in Jesus' death and resurrection is to move 14 inches from your head to your heart – into your life.

That is why I love the story of the Resurrection here in Matthew. It leaves no doubt that Jesus died and rose for us. You see, one of our common fears is the fear of death. People don't like to talk about death. They don't even like the word death. Why? They don't know what's going to happen afterwards, and they're not ready to meet God. The only way to be ready to meet God is to have a relationship with him. That can only happen because of Jesus' death and resurrection.

When you believe that Jesus died and rose for you, you will also begin to believe that what he says about the future is true. And then you can stop being afraid of death. That's the good news of Easter.

3. Commit your fears and life to Christ

One more reason so many people are so scared today is that they've put their trust in the wrong place. People put their trust in money, in their possessions, in their natural ability, in other people, and in a hundred other things.

Do you know what the Bible calls that? It's called idolatry. Placing trust in anything other than God violates the first commandment: You shall have no other gods before me. Anytime we let this happen, we're making something else into a god. And when something of this world becomes more important than God, fear is sure to come. If making money is the number one goal in a person's life, fear of losing it all will follow. If success is the most important thing, a fear of failure will develop. If a person is most important to you, you'll live with fear of losing that person.

Introduction

We seem to be living in a season of _____ in our nation.
500 people were studied and 7,000 fears were discovered.
What is your greatest fear?

One answer to our fears: The truth that God is _____ with us.
Names for fear: _____

Unexpected Hope

First words on the first Easter morning: _____

Unexpected hope--when the last thing you expect becomes _____

What is your greatest fear?

Hope that Overcomes Fear

1. Accept God's _____ for you
2. Believe that Jesus _____ and _____ for you
3. Commit your _____ and _____ to Christ

Easter 2010

My greatest fear is _____

Today I

___ Accept God's unconditional love for me

___ Believe that Jesus Christ died and rose for me

___ Commit my fears and my life to Christ

I place my fear at the foot of the cross of the Resurrected Christ.

“To all who received him, to those who believed in his name, he gave the right to become children of God.” John 1:12