

Sunday, August 23, 2020

“No Fear”

I think probably everyone has heard the phrase, “There is nothing to fear but fear itself.” It was spoken by our president, Franklin D. Roosevelt on March 4, 1933 in his inaugural address. It was the last inaugural address to be held on March 4th. After that time, it was moved to January. We hear that phrase, “There is nothing to fear but fear itself.” But we don't usually hear the words that immediately follow that phrase. Roosevelt said, and I quote. “We have nothing to fear but fear itself. Nameless, unreasoning, unjustified terror which paralyzes needed efforts to convert retreat into advance.”

What was he speaking of? Well in 1933 they were at the zenith of the Great Depression and people were scared. They had fear, and as a result they had made a run on the banks they were hoarding money and they damaged the economy. It was fear; nameless unreasoning unjustified terror that was paralyzing this nation. Fear, it is big powerful motivation and unfortunately fear is often exploited for evil purposes. In all honesty, fear of things that we should not fear can cause catastrophic results. It's what Roosevelt was dealing with. There had been a run on the banks. There was a collapse of the economy. The dollar was being devalued. Crazy inflation was coming into play; and a black-market economy was being set up. Those who were rich were able to get ahead of it. The rich got richer and the poor get poorer. Does this sound familiar?

If we Fast forward 87 years to today. We have tremendous fear. Fear of a virus; a coronavirus that exhibits himself in the disease COVID-19. Because of fear, we have shut down the economy not once, but here in California twice. Originally it was to flatten the curve and allow the medical profession to get itself together, to get prepared, to get everything in place that they needed to combat this pandemic. But as soon as that shutdown began several months ago, there was immediately fear. Instead of a run on the banks, there was a run on Costco, Wal Mart and every other place where we can buy toilet paper, Kleenex's, cleaning wipes. We've been told there is going to be a meat shortage as a result; there's going to be a wheat shortage. Unfortunately, as a result of that shut down and then subsequent extensions of the shutdown, or second

shutdown; It was resulted in the closing forever of at least 56% of the small businesses in our country.

It's an unhealthy fear an unhealthy fear that has led to the closing of schools in spite of recommendations by the CDC or the American Pediatrics Association. What is the result of closing the schools? Adolescent suicide is at its highest level ever. The number of cases of depression Is growing astronomically among our children. Why would that be? Well there's a biblical reason. It's right there in the first three chapters of Genesis. When God created man he said, 'it is not good for man to be alone.' God created us for community. He created man and woman, husband and wife, and his command to them was be fruitful and multiply. Build a family, build community. That is what our bodies are designed for, for community. And in fear the government has closed the Church. The only source let me repeat that, the only source of healthy fear.

Matthew records Jesus talking about healthy fear. Jesus says, "Do not fear those who can kill the body but are unable to kill the soul." That would be unhealthy fear. That's why He says, 'do not fear those who can kill your body but can't kill your soul. Rather, here comes the healthy fear. Fear him who can destroy both soul and body in hell. What Jesus is saying is an echo of Deuteronomy 6 verse 13, the very foundation of the Law. "It is the Lord you shall fear." Why? Yes, destruction, because he is the one who can destroy both body and soul and hell. But let's now look also at Psalm 111:10 "The fear of the Lord is the beginning of wisdom. All those who practice it have a good understanding. His praise endures forever."

But fear the Lord is the beginning of wisdom. What is wisdom? I love this definition: An understanding of the times; how to properly react; a fear of the Lord; standing in awe of God because He is creator, and He is ultimately judge, and He is Savior. The fear of the Lord, knowing that is the beginning understanding the times and how we should react. So, the first thing is to acknowledge God is Creator, King of Kings, Lord of lords, He is in ultimate control and this creation belongs to Him. When we practice that fear of the Lord, acknowledging Him in that, and understanding what He has done for us, it leads us to what Jesus tells us in Matthew chapter 23; when He's confronted and asked what's the greatest law of all? And He takes it from fear to, love the Lord your God for your heart, soul, mind and strength. Love your neighbors

as yourself. That's why the commandments begin with you shall have no other gods. This is a good understanding that God is the One who we are under His control. This is why Jesus says, 'don't fear those who can kill the body, but can't kill your soul. But fear Him who could kill them both.

Human beings are easily manipulated, so we end up being deceived by things that we should not fear. While we have no fear of what we should really fear. God can be downright terrifying, and God can be the ultimate example of Love. Our problem is we've cut God out of our society. True wisdom; don't fear Covid-19! For one thing, it is being blown a bit out of proportion. Don't get me wrong, it can kill you and it is highly contagious. It is nothing like polio was or many other pandemics we have had. We know what to do, wear a mask, distance yourself, sanitize things and keep your body in good shape. That's one of the things that just comes out in this whole Covid-19 thing; is that if you are in good health it is not a big threat to you. Real wisdom right now would be to fear God instead of Covid-19. Because there is something far worse than Covid-19. Right now, I believe there is a tremendous call to the church to keep its priorities in order, and also look at the silver lining.

Let me be very clear, we cannot sacrifice robust spiritual health because of a virus. The Bible is very clear in what it says. Paul writes to Timothy, the young pastor and in 2 Timothy 4 verse 2 that he was to preach and teach in season, and out of season. I have a little bit of an understanding of in season and out of season. It's not dealing with winter, spring, summer and fall; it's dealing with fishing season. There is a fishing season and there is a time that is out of fishing season. When it is out of season, it is illegal to fish and you can get in trouble. The government has just told us church is out of season. What does the Bible tell us? No, it's not! Preach the word in season and out of season.

When we go to Hebrews 10: 25, it tells us that we are not to neglect the public gathering as some are in the habit of doing. When we look at the actual Greek there, it is literally, do not neglect the gathering of the complete group in one place. The Greek words there are only used in one other place and that is a reference to when Jesus gathers all who believe in him in one place with him on judgment day. In 1 Timothy 4 verse 13 Paul tells Timothy, "devote yourself to the public reading of scripture." Devote yourself to that. That's what your to do as a pastor, make the public reading number one. We don't

save lives in any way that count for all eternity by putting a muzzle on our public proclamation of the Word of life. On an eternal scale, the Covid-19 risk is very low. On an eternal scale the wages of sin is off the charts! In reality sin is the deadliest infection ever for the human race. It is running rampant during this pandemic as we lose our priorities, we lose our wisdom, and our eye is off of what is really happening. We are disregarding the Word of God. Reality, “Jesus Christ is the only cure.”

Could you imagine if a pharmaceutical company came up with a cure for COVID-19? It has no negative side effects, and it cures you in 24 hours. Could you imagine if a pharmaceutical company had that and the government said ‘sorry you cannot administer that to the people. We're in the middle of a pandemic. There would be a riot everywhere, a civil war and that government would be out of office. I would dare say, probably within an hour of telling people they can't have the cure. What if we had a vaccine 100% effective, with no side effects. Again, if the government said ‘sorry you can't have that. There would be absolute chaos as the government gets overthrown. And yet here we are with the only cure for eternal judgment Jesus Christ; sharing that, speaking of that, coming together to thank God for that; is being outlawed.

The church is the body of believers. Jesus says in Matthew 5, the sermon on the Mount, that we are the salt of the earth. Salt preserves and salt gives taste. The church is here to restrain the putrefaction, the rotting of a corrupt culture. We are told that we are the light of the world, that will show the disease, sin and the cure, Jesus. And what is Jesus is promised to us concerning this wisdom, being His church? Matthew 16 verse 18, the gates of hell will not overcome it. Could there be anything more callous or unloving than to cause a people to fear a virus and then shut them off from the only source where they can have that ultimate fear, fear of death, finally and completely removed?

We God's church, the body of Christ, cannot relinquish our duties before God, in order to appease the arbitrary, mercurial and onerous restrictions of a governor accounting health supervisor or any other government official who seeks to impose who's better given the propagation and proclamation of the cure; the gospel of Jesus Christ. And nor can we fear the consequences. We fear the Lord. What are we afraid of? We are afraid of forsaking the public gathering and the reading of scriptures. We fear what happens if we are not

preaching and teaching in and out of season. We fear the results of people not hearing of the cure. Because we love God and we love our neighbor enough to stand on God's Word, to preach that Word to live that Word. And do so to His glory and for the Salvation and safety of others. But that is the silver lining that we can find in this COVID-19. People are desperate for that good news and I'd contend that we can almost always find a silver lining when we have wisdom. An example I will share with you this was given to me several months ago by one of the veterans in our church. He said pastor, you might be able to use this sometime in a sermon. So, Glenn thank you. I'm using it in a sermon.

On December 6th, 1941, Japan bombed Pearl Harbor. The day after that Admiral Chester Nimitz was at a concert. The president called the concert hall, he wanted to speak with Admiral Chester Nimitz, he told him, 'you are now commander of the Pacific fleet.' On Christmas Eve, Admiral Nimitz flew to Hawaii. Please remember this is before jet airlines and stuff, this was not a short flight. Christmas Day in Hawaii was spent on a tour boat touring the wreckage of Pearl Harbor. When he was done, someone said, 'Admiral Nimitz, what do you think?' His response was, 'Either the Japanese made the three biggest mistakes ever in military history, or God is taking care of the United States of America.' People looked at him and said, what? Because everyone looked at the attack on Pearl Harbor as a brilliant strategic move by the Japanese, so well-orchestrated, it caught us totally off guard and decimated the Pacific fleet. He said, 'let me tell you what I mean. Mistake number 1, the attack on a Sunday morning, 90% of the crewmen were on shore because it was Sunday, they get to go to church. Mistake number 2, as those pilots came in, they focused on those big, bad battleships. They just dropped bombs and torpedoes on and decimated them. However, if they were smart, they would have attacked on the other side of the harbor where the drydocks were. The reality is all those ships were in Pearl Harbor because they needed servicing. And where they got serviced was right around the harbor. So, we can now just float these ships, take them over there, fix them and get them back out to sea. If they had blown up the drydock, we would have had to refloat the ships, and tow them back to the mainland, fix them there, and then bring them back. We are going to get them back faster than if we had to tow them just back to the mainland. And mistake number 3, that hill over there; on the other side of it is the storage tanks for all of our fuel for the entire Pacific Theater. One bomb there would have stopped everything we could do in the Pacific. So, either they made three terribly, big mistakes or God is protecting us. Taking a look at the

devastation of Pearl Harbor, he put it in perspective. God can work good out of this because God is in control.

Dear brothers and sisters in Christ, right now we're dealing with a situation in our country where the media, where some in government, some all over the place, are scaring everyone. They are closing schools, bankrupting businesses, depressing children. It's an ugly scene. We hear of people dying in the hospital with no one who loves them around. Can you think of a better time than right now to preach the gospel of Jesus Christ? A gospel that tells people about a God who loves them, who will never leave them or forsake you. Who says, I am the only One. The One who says, 'don't give up. I can give you new health. I can give you new life. With Me, there's only good.' And that is why dear brothers and sisters, the Law of God is wise and good. It shows us our sin, it shows us our need for a Savior, it shows us we should be doing right now. We should be worshipping our Savior, we should be focusing on Him, we should be growing in ministry, we should be salt of the earth and we should be the light of the world. In our Savior's Name, Amen.

As we bring the service to a close, Jean again is going to play the first couple lines of melody from the hymn "God is wise and good" which would be our closing hymn. But if you have any questions, if you are not a member of Zion, and if you fear this virus and you don't want to fear it anymore, please contact us. God to our website www.zlclodi.org. Send men an email pastormatt@zlclodi.org. I would love to talk with you, I would love the email with you, I'd love to share with you the good news of Jesus who overcomes the fear of Covid-19 and just the joy of knowing Him as our loving Savior.