

Talk It Over

Do Not Be Afraid (part 2)

SMALL TALK

1. Were your parents calming influences in a potentially frightening experience as a child? What did they do?

VIEWPOINT

2. **READ Matthew 6:9-13.** If you were to use this simple 5 step prayer as an outline for your prayer what would you pray under your current circumstances? P
3. **READ Philippians 1:12-14.** What are some of the surprising positive things that took place because Paul experienced the negative hard stuff he went through?
4. **READ 1 Peter 2:24-25.** You might want to read also the passage Peter was quoting from which is Isaiah 53. What do you make of this? What does God do? What effect does this have on you? What effect does God want it to have?

GETTING PERSONAL

5. Jim spoke about how John and Paul experienced a forced “social distancing” and a “quarantine” of sorts. They both took up a pen and advanced the good news. God has a good plan in his bigger picture for this not so good stuff in our small picture. How can we pick up a pen, or phone, or social media to advance the good news in a time when bad news is what most people are dealing with? Brainstorm.
6. What are you willing to do to be intentional about engaging more rather than less during this time of social distance?

MAKING PROGRESS

7. As some of your old routines are disrupted, what new routines could bring more peace and stability to you during this time?

March 22, 2020

Do Not Be Afraid (part 2)

I'm so glad you decided to join us today in "Do Not Be Afraid" part 2.

Last week we focused on how this storm does not surprise God and being in the boat with Jesus is the safest place to be even in the middle of a raging storm! If you missed part 1, its available to you on our website.

While staying on the topic of our fears, I want to begin today with a personal story.

My story is a childhood story in general terms because something like this happened frequently. I grew up in Japan because my parents were missionaries. Earthquakes were frequent experiences throughout my childhood. When everything begins to shake in a house, the rattle and rumble is loud, and the shaking is very unsettling, then often the power would go out. So the fear that an earthquake produced was always more fearful when things were dark.

Whether you have been in an earthquake or not, maybe you can relate. Doesn't it seem like our fears are stronger while in the dark of the night? Why is that? Is it because we can't see? Is it because we can't see and we feel more alone? So we have the combination of the feeling of things are completely out of our control, and we don't know what is going to happen, and we are alone. Fears can grow under these circumstances.

As a child I took comfort from my dad. He didn't seem to be shaken. He'd tell me its ok. Its just some shaking and he also provided light. I'm an adult now and I still take comfort in times

like these by going to my father. Let's do that together in the way that Jesus gave instructions to his disciples about how to pray. He did tell them to pray these words only, but this is how you pray. So, if you don't mind, I will lead us with this how to pray outline.

Matthew 6:9-13 (NIV) {9} "This, then, is how you should pray: " 'Our Father in heaven, hallowed be your name, {10} your kingdom come, your will be done, on earth as it is in heaven. {11} Give us today our daily bread. {12} And forgive us our debts, as we also have forgiven our debtors. {13} And lead us not into temptation, but deliver us from the evil one.'

Someone said, "Social Distancing", it's the introvert's dream come true.

That's funny. I don't know if you know this or not, but I'm an introvert. But let me just go on record to say, this is not my dream come true. I miss you. I do not like preaching to a camera with you only in my mind's eye.

But I no longer view our circumstances as a terrible thing. God is not surprised. He has plans for us and these are good plans. You need to be encouraged by what I believe God is doing in our midst. A powerful thought struck me when I sought God for his message for us on this very unusual Sunday.

Some of the most encouraging words we have about following Jesus in difficult times came from Paul's and John's pens while they were in quarantine.

Neither one of their quarantines were due to a virus. John was exiled to the Island of Patmos a very small island used for political exiles. He was an old man by then. An early church father writes about it. John was exiled about 95AD and was in exile for about a

year and half as a prisoner in isolation and unable to preach the Gospel. But did it stop him? No, it only gave him an opportunity for a new approach. Had he not experienced “Social Distancing” on the Island of Patmos, in this forced quarantine, we would be missing the capstone book, the last book of the Bible, “Revelation”. It’s the book that shows us that no matter how bad things get, God protects us and God’s Kingdom wins! Do not be afraid. Be faithful. Faith is the antidote to fear. Worship is the antidote to worry.

Then there was Paul’s quarantine. Paul was unjustly arrested. He was incarcerated for 2 years at Caesarea, and then after exercising his right as a Roman citizen to appeal to Caesar he awaited a hearing in Rome. He did not know if he would be executed, or released. In Rome, he was under “house arrest”, guarded by Roman Soldiers who took turns guarding him. He waited this way in Rome for an additional 2 years! Paul experienced more than 4 years of quarantine! But that quarantine resulted in 5 very helpful letters: Ephesians, Philippians, Colossians, Philemon, and 2 Timothy.

Can you imagine the adjustment that had to take place in Paul’s heart and mind? Paul was preaching with great effectiveness. Then he was quarantined unjustly! The attempt was to remove him from influencing the crowds. It seemed like there was an enemy attempting to halt the surging advancement of the gospel. But God had something better in mind, and no enemy is a match for God’s sovereign power and ability to see the bigger picture.

God had bigger plans for the “quarantine”, and “social distancing” than anyone could have realized!

If you want to be encouraged during this wild and unpredictable dark time we are experiencing right now, here is what I recommend. Self limit your bad news intake, and increase your

good news intake. Reach out to your heavenly father in new ways and may I recommend reading Philippians! As your regular routines are being disrupted, let's build better stabilization routines, and let's do this together in new and appropriate ways.

Just as God prepared Paul and John for their turn of events. He has prepared us for such a time as this.

The parallels are profound. God sees the big picture. We only see our little pictures and dimly. God's big picture is good, even if it seems to us that our little pictures aren't looking so great.

Our enemy, our spiritual adversary, thinks he is winning the battle shutting down services. He is not! And let's not let him. Let's be the church. Let's shine bright when things seem dark! We can make a difference even as Paul made a difference while experiencing social distancing!

We are not going to shrink back under social distancing; we are going to advance the cause of the Gospel! I believe we can move toward greater engagement through this storm not less engagement!

We need to think bigger. We need to think in terms of what God is doing all across our community and all across the globe to expand his kingdom. America needs to shift its thinking, and perhaps this is precisely what is going to shake us awake!

The church is not a meeting. The church is not a building. We are the church and we can advance the gospel in new and powerful ways. This is the perfect opportunity to see this happen.

I. **What has happened can ADVANCE the gospel**

Philippians 1:12 (NIV) Now I want you to know, brothers and

sisters, that what has happened to me has actually served to advance the gospel.

When Paul was in prison, he took up his PEN.

II. God has a PLAN and you have the PEN

If these new circumstances feel difficult and confining to you, how will you take up the pen? (phone, text, social media {any conversation is social media}].

First, a video parable (the “I’M IN” video from the “I’m In” series in folder).

A revival fire begins to build with little commitments, little expressions of love, little acts of faith, little voices in worship, little habits. I’m In.

- If you are a family you can engage in children’s church online together. What an opportunity we have here!
- Lets brainstorm a little.... Maybe you know someone who is afraid to go out to buy groceries because of their compromised immune system and they don’t do online shopping. Maybe you are the answer to their prayer!

Do you see how our 20/20 Vision is becoming more clear because of this? That is God working to clear the way for us to get involved in new ways!

We can reach more people with love than ever. It may look different. Invite people to church. That looks different now. Different for the better perhaps! How threatening is an online platform. How pertinent is it to hear these messages at a time like this!

Paul was in prison so he took up a pen. We are experiencing social distancing, what will you pick up to span the gap? You are the light of the world. You shine! What are you going to do to shine?

Don't use "social distancing" as an excuse to remain in isolation

*Philippians 1:13-14 (NIV) As a result, it has become clear throughout the whole palace guard and to everyone else that I am in chains for Christ. {14} And **because of my chains**, most of the brothers and sisters have become confident in the Lord **and dare all the more to proclaim the gospel without fear.***

III. Let's **DARE** to proclaim **GOOD NEWS** all the more

The only way we can do this is if we take the Hand of the Father, who sees in the darkness. He is the keeper of tomorrow. He sees what's around the corner. He has no fear. We are like little children. At peace after an earthquake. Listen to the Father, talk to the Father, allow the good news to fill you, and become the good news for someone else. Dads. Bring peace to your households with new routines that fill you with peace. Husbands bring good news and rejoicing to your wives. Households. Take the time even now to remember what Jesus has done for you. He has made it possible for you to experience peace with God.

After I read the next scripture in closing, would you do me a favor? If you are a believer, or you are ready to express your faith in Jesus, go find some elements in your home or meeting place right now to remember what Jesus has done for you. If you don't have grape juice, improvise. You are joining countless millions across the globe this morning remembering Jesus by taking bread that reminds us of his body given for us, and a cup that reminds us of his shed blood for us. Remember how much God loves you and what His son did for you. If you don't have unleavened bread,

improvise. And you might want to think of getting ready for this again next week with grape juice and bread. Take the cup and the bread and remember Christ gave himself for us.

*1 Peter 2:24-25 (NIV) “He himself bore our sins” in his body on the cross, so that we might die to sins and live for righteousness; “by his wounds you have been healed.”
{25} For “you were like sheep going astray,” but now you have returned to the Shepherd and Overseer of your souls.*