



## **WEEKLY STUDY February 5 – February 11, 2023**

(Use this guide to individually or with a group dive deeper into this week's sermon.)

### **Our sermon series for February is: "Fear Not"**

Let's talk about fear! Is it something that's just an expected part of life? Does fear always stand in the way of our doing what we need to do? What place does fear have for us as followers of Jesus? How do we follow Jesus words to 'fear not' when it seems as if there is much to fear in our world?

### **Our scripture this week is Luke 8:22-25**

"One day Jesus said to his disciples, 'Let us go over to the other side of the lake.' So they got into a boat and set out. As they sailed, he fell asleep. A squall came down on the lake, so that the boat was being swamped, and they were in great danger.

The disciples went and woke him, saying, 'Master, Master, we're going to drown!'

He got up and rebuked the wind and the raging waters; the storm subsided, and all was calm.

'Where is your faith?' He asked his disciples.

In fear and amazement they asked one another, 'Who is this? He commands even the winds and the water, and they obey him.'"

- 1)** Luke 8: 22-25 has inspired several of our great hymns of the church. We heard or sang several on Sunday, including some of these: "When the Storms of life are raging, Stand by me"; "Peace, Be Still" (Master the tempest is raging, the billows are tossing high); "How Firm a Foundations (When through the deep waters, I call thee to go; the rivers of sorrow shall not overflow); "Be Still My Soul" (Be still my soul, the winds and waves still know the voice who ruled them); "Jesus, Savior pilot me over life's impetuous sea"; "Love Lifted Me" (Souls in danger look above, Jesus completely saves. He will lift you by his love out of the angry waves.); "It is well with my Soul" (When peace like a River attendeth my way, and sorrows like sea billows roll)." (Can you tell I played the piano at church from ages 9-24 every Sunday in either a Sunday school class or worship service)? This scripture captures the imagination – maybe because it's easy to identify with the fear of the disciples or because the calm of Jesus is so reassuring. And the hymns that echo words from the story serve to help us remember in the midst of fear Jesus calms and cares for us. Maybe more importantly, help us answer the question, "Who is Jesus?"

***Question: Read again the Luke 8:22-25. What words or phrases speak to you today? Is there a hymn that captures the same words or feelings for you?***

2) Pastor Sam started the sermon on Sunday reminding us of some “fear facts”. Fear is one of seven universal emotions experienced by all humans. The others are: Anger, contempt, disgust, enjoyment, sadness, surprise. This serves as a good reminder that we are created with a range of emotions so they are a natural part of us. We may deny we have any one of the above, but we are hard-wired for these. She said, “If anyone says they have no fears, we know they are lying.” Some of these seven emotions surprised me. (And the absence of some surprised me as well). But it reminded me that we often use Emotions and Feelings interchangeably. And that this sometimes is what stands in the way of us understanding both our own actions and those of others. When we experience fear, it triggers emotions based on past experiences (which are different from person to person) and that influences our thoughts, perceptions, and actions. While I (based on several embarrassing throwing up experiences) experience fear when I see a roller coaster, you (based on laughter and thrill) experience enjoyment when seeing a roller coaster.

**Question: What value do you see in knowing humans are hardwired for certain emotions? When you are in a place of fear, what feelings are triggered and what prior happenings in your life related to fear elicit those emotions?**

3) We were also reminded that fear elicits ‘fight’ or ‘flight’ reactions in us. Certainly what we see in Sunday’s scripture from the disciples is a ‘flight’ reaction. (Master -save us now! Get us out of this storm!) And we often label the response of the disciples as a lack of faith and thus a wrong response. But Pastor Sam said to us, “Fear is not the absence of faith. Faith empowers us to move forward in spite of fear.” She also reminded us that the Bible is full of stories where people respond to God’s call with fear. And that leads to excuses to God of why they are the wrong person for God to ask for a task. Sam – in reflecting January’s sermon series – said, “In January we were called to ordering our lives around the essentials of faith. In February we are called to “bungee jumping.” Faith calls us into situations where we are asked to speak up, to act out of our faith convictions, and to witness to God’s love for all.

**Question: What have you been taught related to fear and faith? Can you think of things you’ve been called to do or to say that meant overcoming fear because of your faith?**

4) Life can sometimes feel like a series of storms we are trying to endure. Pastor Sam likened it to going through the Drake Passage between South America and Antarctica. Going through it means waves, wind, and currents that beat against us. But on the other side, there is beauty and wonders. Friendships are formed with those who are with us in the passage. We learn to depend on those who have expertise to lead us safely. Those thoughts led me to another song – this one by Andrae Crouch, “Through it All.” Andrae suffered from dyslexia. In the space of two years he lost his mother, his father, and his brother. He states that the song reminds him we all have lots of experiences in our lives where we have to trust in Jesus. He says in this song, “I thank God for the mountains and I thank Him for the valleys. I thank Him for the storms he brought me through. For if

I'd never had a problem, I'd wouldn't know God could solve them. I'd never know what faith in God could do."

**Question: In what ways do you identify with what Sam illustrated using the Drake passage, or in what Andrae Crouch illustrated in the song, "Through it all?" What have been some of those stormy times in your life where faith in God gave you the strength to make it through?**

**Prayer: Gracious God. Some days we have no words. Fear stops our paths. Like the disciples we lose sight of any abilities we have and become paralyzed – unable to think or act or move. But you remind constantly that you are with us. You are the one who steadies us. You are the one who helps us remember the gifts you have given us enabling to face our fears through faith. Perhaps we shake our heads at those fearful disciples. After all, many were fisherman. They were used to rough seas. They had skills to face the storm. But in that moment, all thoughts of what they could do fled from them. And they did the only thing they knew to do – call upon Jesus to rescue them. Help us remember that just as the Disciples were not alone – that Jesus was with them, we too are not alone. You guide us and comfort us and nudge us forward. We lean on you, O God. And we know because you are with us, we can move through fear with faith. In Jesus name we pray, AMEN**

**Weekly Challenge: Spend time meditating on fear. Where in your life is fear stopping you from doing something you feel called to do? What challenges are you experiencing that are making you fearful? Which of those are important enough to go through with faith?**

*(Weekly study guide prepared by Rev. MaryJane Pierce Norton)*