**St Martins C3 – November 19, 2023**

**Fear Not – Fear of Loss**

**Sermon Summary:**

God will transform our lives with His life, if we are willing to bring our fears to Him and let Him deal with them. So, in this series we are encouraging you to take an honest look at how much these fears are affecting your life and give permission to God to replace those fears with His perspective.This includes:

* Admitting where in our lives our fears influence us.
* Surrendering them to Christ.
* Replacing those fears with faith in Christ.

If we keep letting our fears dominate our thinking, we will:

* Be increasingly distracted and unproductive.
* Drained of energy
* Distance ourselves from God.

As we put our trust in Christ and with His help overcome fear, we will gain a sense of freedom, empowerment and peace. We will be a more confident person, ready to take on challenges.

Today, we are exploring the fear of losing someone or something in our lives that is important to us. Not the actual thing happening, but the possibility of it happening. Consider, what is something or who is someone in your life you couldn’t bear to lose? Then consider why that would be so unbearable for you?

Many people cover up this fear of loss, by trying to control everything they can control. This has the appearance of overcoming the fear, but that is an illusion. We are just covering up the fear with control, rather that trusting in Christ.

**Read: Philippians 4:6-7, 1:18-21, James 4:13-15**

There is no need to fear what might happen, because God’s provision and purpose is bigger than any loss that might come our way. Because of the security of God’s love for us and His purposes for our lives, we can live confidently in Him, without fear of what might happen tomorrow.

1. **The only way for us to be truly free of our fears is to fully surrender our lives to Christ.**
2. **Process your needs with God. - Pray**

Are we going to put our energy into praying things through with God, or taking control ourselves and managing every risk that we can?

1. **Be grateful**

Gratitude maintains a healthy perspective on life, where we constantly remind ourselves of how God cares for us.

**Read: Romans 8:35-39**

**God’s love and purposes for us are much greater than any fear that we will face, so let us surrender our need to control and hand our fear of loss over to Christ, so His love can flood in.**

**Suggested questions for Connect Group discussion:**

*The fear of rejection, failure or loss is present in all our lives, which one do you think might affect you the most?*

 *What has helped you overcome a fear in your life?*

*When you consider that as a society we probably have more affluence than generations before us, why are we so fearful of losing what we have?*

*What do we learn from Philippians 4:6-7 about overcoming the fear of loss?*

*Do you agree with the premise of Sunday’s message, that our desire to control many things around our lives is often motivated by the fear of losing them?*

*Why do we need to surrender our need to control things around our lives, in order to experience freedom from the fear of loss?*

*Why is experiencing the fullness of God’s love for us so important in overcoming the fear of loss?*

**Monday’s Devotion – Stop generating fear.**

**Romans 6:16**

*Don’t you realize that you become the slave of whatever you choose to obey? You can be a slave to sin, which leads to death, or you can choose to obey God, which leads to righteous living.*

Our fears are a bit like snowballs, the more we roll them around, the bigger they get. Unnecessary fears are sinful, because they are a lack of trust in Christ. Our fears are like sin, the more we focus on them, the bigger they get and the more they influences our lives. So, let us stop generating fear in our lives.

However, that is easier said than done, right? We seem to live in a very anxious world, which feeds our fears. (I think it is interesting that in the western world, we have more than we have ever had before, but we are more anxious than we have ever been before).

It is easy for us to internalise the environment we are in. Then we may ponder on what others are also fearful of and we become fearful too.

There are a couple of things we can do, to avoid fear building up in our lives:

1. Spend time in God’s word, so that our perspective is shaped by God, rather than by the fears of this world. This helps us identify the fears quickly and not start the “ball rolling.”
2. When you do catch yourself focussing on your fears, take it quickly to Christ and surrender it to Him. This breaks the power of the fear, before it takes hold.

**Tuesday’s Devotion – Impeded judgement**

**Matthew 2:16**

*Herod was furious when he realized that the wise men had outwitted him. He sent soldiers to kill all the boys in and around Bethlehem who were two years old and under, based on the wise men’s report of the star’s first appearance.*

It is easy for us to skip over this horrendous part of the Christmas story. It boggles our minds that a king could order such a senseless act of brutality. That is, until we realise how fearful Herod was. Herod’s life was dominated by fear. When there was even a hint that one of his family members might dethrone him, he would have them killed. So, when Herod heard that there was a new King of the Jews born in Bethlehem, his fear drove him to kill every baby in the town.

This highlights an important point regarding our unreasonable and irrational fears. They will exaggerate our emotional reactions. Consider a time when you overacted to a situation. I almost guarantee that someone pushed one of your “fear buttons.” You over-reacted with an angry response, because they touched on an underlying fear in your life. (Usually a fear relating to how you see yourself)

God doesn’t want us to lose control. The result of His Spirit working in our lives, is self-control. So, let us bring our fears to God, and with His help overcome them, so that our underlying fears don’t unhinge our judgement in everyday situations.

**Wednesday’s Devotion – Developing courage**

**Deuteronomy 31:6**

*So be strong and courageous! Do not be afraid and do not panic before them. For the Lord your God will personally go ahead of you. He will neither fail you nor abandon you.*

Godly courage is needed to overcome worldly fears. If the fear wasn’t there, we wouldn’t need the courage to overcome it. So, although fear is not from God, He still uses it to develop courage within us to overcome those fears.

The context of the verse above is the Israelites preparing to fight the Canaanites. What we need to keep in mind, is that for generations Israel had never fought a battle. They didn’t have any weapons or know how to use them. They were afraid of their ignorance and afraid of the potential superiority of their enemy.

We can be like the Israelites when it comes to our fears. Out of inexperience we think what we are facing is bigger than what it actually is, or we simply make it a big thing in our minds. What we need is what Israel needed. A reminder that as we stay close to Christ, we will step into His purposes for our lives. His purposes are bigger than whatever enemy we are facing, so why be fearful? He is going ahead of us, so it is in Him that we put our courage.

Not only is God going ahead of us, so that we can enter into His good purpose for our lives. God presence is also with us. A powerful supporter is just what we need to instil courage in us. So, be courageous today in whatever you are facing. Your enemy is not as big as you imagine him to be when compared to the Lord.

**Thursday’s Devotion – Responding well**

**Numbers 13-14**

*“The land we travelled through and explored will devour anyone who goes to live there…. Why is the Lord taking us to this country only to have us die in battle?...**Then they plotted among themselves, “Let’s choose a new leader and go back to Egypt!”* *Then Moses and Aaron fell face down on the ground before the whole community of Israel.**Two of the men who had explored the land, Joshua son of Nun and Caleb son of Jephunneh, tore their clothing.**They said to all the people of Israel, “The land we travelled through and explored is a wonderful land! And if the Lord is pleased with us, he will bring us safely into that land and give it to us.”*

We can’t eliminate fearful things happening around our lives. So, don’t try and change what can’t be changed. Yes, there was a formidable enemy in the Promised Land. That was a fact. The choice Israel had was how were they going to RESPOND to that situation? Were they going to choose a fearful response, as most of them do above? Or, a faith response, which Joshua and Caleb do. Let us take note, that only those who chose a faith response actually entered the land!

The lesson for us to learn in this, is to RESPOND well. There are many things in our lives that are beyond our control. However, we still get to choose how we RESPOND to those situations. Are we going to choose a faith response or a fear response. A faith response leads us into God’s purposes, a fear response doesn’t.

**Friday’s Devotion – Perfect love**

**1 John 4:16-18**

*We know how much God loves us, and we have put our trust in his love. God is love, and all who live in love live in God, and God lives in them. And as we live in God, our love grows more perfect. So we will not be afraid on the day of judgment, but we can face him with confidence because we live like Jesus here in this world. Such love has no fear, because* ***perfect love expels all fear.*** *If we are afraid, it is for fear of punishment,* ***and this shows that we have not fully experienced his perfect love.***

Fully experiencing God’s love is vital for our spiritual growth, including overcoming our inner fears. Theologically I wrestled with this one a bit, because the opposite to fear isn’t love, its faith. (As we have already explored this week) So, if we need to rid fear from our lives, we need more faith, right? Well, that is true. However, God’s love has an important role to play as well.

We were created to be in relationship with God and others. It is within those relationships that we develop the emotional and spiritual resources to overcome our inner doubts and fears. A fear seems bigger when you are dealing with it alone. It reduces, when someone bigger and stronger is with you.

In pastoral life, I have witnessed God’s perfect love setting many people free of their deep fears. It is like God’s love fills that assurance need in our lives so much, that there is simply no room for our fears to occupy. So, let us ask for a greater revelation of God’s love for us, because as we receive it, many are fears will dissipate.