

SUNDAY, MARCH 15, 2020 – Facebook Devotional Message

Morning everyone. It is Sunday March, 15, and I wanted to share with you, thoughts for today.

We are at home in the study preparing for today and the many things that I have to accomplish today, but we are home away from the church, simply because of the Corona Virus. And I wanted to just share with you to keep us in touch with each other and in touch with the word, and look at some things that we can learn even in the circumstances in which we find ourselves today.

I wanted to go with you to Matthew chapter eight verses 23 through 27. Now this is probably a familiar passage for most of you.

Now when Jesus got into the boat his disciples followed him. And suddenly a great Tempest arose on the sea so that the boat was covered with waves. But he was asleep. Then his disciples came to him and woke him saying, Lord, save us. We are perishing, but he said to them, why are you fearful Oh ye of little faith. Then he rose and rebuked the winds, and the sea, and there was great calm. So, the men marveled saying, who can this be even the winds and the sea, obey.

Well, as I said, most of us are watching this from home. We're in the midst of a worldwide crisis. There have been all kinds of things to set our nerves on edge first of all the Corona Virus itself. And then mixed messages that have come from various governments and doctors around the world. The arguing amongst ourselves on Facebook, oh, it's just a cold no it's a deadly virus and everywhere in between. The strange behaviors of our friends and even other persons that we don't know so let's talk about that for a moment because we truly are in the midst of the tempest, even though we're sitting comfortably at home on our couches this morning.

When the Corona Virus struck, we all thought well we hope that it doesn't come here. And it only took a few short days. We found ourselves, watching the news and seeing the stories of the Life Care Center in Washington and then hearing later of the new outbreak in California and then the outbreak in New York and then we've watched as the virus widely spread.

But you know what is more frightening than the virus itself. I went to Dollar General the other day to pick up something for a friend. And when I got there, I discovered that there was no toilet paper on the shelves, half of the paper towels were missing and I got the last two gallons of water. There has been a frenzy in buying. And I think more than the virus that has scared people. They've watched people begin to hoard, they've watched as we've stopped thinking about others, they've watched as we hoarded. And that itself produces more.

So, I wanted to share this passage with you this morning. Because the world is full of fear for one reason or another. It's either the virus and we're afraid that it's going to kill us. Or we're afraid that will be without the necessary items to take care of ourselves and our families. There are grocery stores that have empty shelves and we've now been told, if you want to go shopping and get everything you need maybe you should go after midnight when the stores are restocked. So, we're afraid that we're not going to have enough food and water. There are a lot of things that we're afraid of.

But I want to tell you that being afraid is not being sinful. Fear is a normal human response when we face circumstances that we neither expect, nor are prepared for. Fear is something that happens when we face the unknown. So a little bit of fear is understandable. But let's not replace that feeling of being afraid, with being fearful.

That's what the disciples were; fearful. It started out with just the feeling of being afraid. And then you can imagine that they looked at what was happening around them and they began to talk to each other. That being afraid, built and built and built into a sense of fear, until they went to the Lord and said, "Master save us, we're perishing."

Well, they were out on a boat in the Sea of Galilee, and the winds on any small lake can drive the waves up, we know that, we live near Lake Erie and Lake Erie being the smallest of the five Great Lakes is also one of the roughest, because of its size and what happens when the winds begin to blow.

So, let's not be fearful. Let's not let everything that's happening around us with the virus itself, and the shortages and the mass buying out of being afraid affect our lives, and make our souls fearful.

That's one thing to remember; there is a huge difference between being simply afraid, and being so fearful that it affects everything about our day. It stops us in our tracks we're afraid to go out our door. We're afraid to talk to our neighbor. We're afraid to go somewhere to the doctor's office for fear that we might contract the virus. And so, we don't go to the doctor because we don't want to catch this dreaded disease, and we avoid taking care of ourselves in the process.

Our children are home from school. And they're already confused and if you're like me, I have two foreign exchange students who are wondering about what's going on at home and whether they'll be able to go home on time, and how this is going to affect them. They've already had a field trip canceled. So, they're confused. Our children are looking to us for strength and for wisdom, and we should be looking at each other for the same thing.

But more than that, we should be looking at the Word of God and the one who is the very word of God for strength and wisdom to dispel the fearfulness in our hearts. The other thing is, when we get fearful, we also get fretful. We begin to act as though we are Chicken Little and the sky is falling. And that's not to make fun of what's going on because what's going on is serious. But let's take a lesson from the disciples, all the fretting in the world didn't change their circumstance. They were caught on the open sea which really was a lake, being tossed by the waves, and the winds. The waves, Scripture tells us, were over at the boat, higher than the boat, crashing into the boat. And that has got to be how many, many in our world feel today. Even if you and I may not be one of them. The world is fretful. And the world is confused.

This is not to say that this virus isn't dangerous, it is simply to say is getting the best of most of us. And it is spinning us out of control, to the point where we no longer think of each other. All we think about is taking care of ourselves, the panic buying is proof of that. There are newborn babies that need diapers and wipes and water for formula. And yet there is no water on the shelf.

Do you see my point? We are so consumed with surviving this ourselves that we have lost sight of those around us. We are wringing our hands. And we are convinced that none of us are going to get out of this, but I doubt that is the case. We are a people who claims the name of Jesus, and the father code of God. And so we need to stop fretting and replace the fearfulness, and the fretting with faith.

Jesus said to His disciples again, "Why are you fearful, oh ye of little faith." Now that wasn't condemnation, but it was a reminder of who they were with and whose they are.

While we're in the midst of this mess that we find ourselves in. It's very easy to do what the disciples did, become fearful and fret and take a stand and cry out to God and say, "Lord, we're going to perish." And there is nothing wrong with crying out to God in the midst of a crisis. There is nothing wrong with crying out to God, period.

But let's hear again, the words of the Master, why are you, fearful? He was in the boat with them, of all the people in the world. They were the safest. He was not going to let anything happen to them. They were chosen. They were his. And they were called. They were the future of everything that he had come to bring his world and ours.

And that's still the case. We are the future of everything that Jesus came to bring the world.

Why should we be fearful? Let's replace that fearfulness with faith. Let's choose to look at this differently. Instead of looking at this virus as something that may kill us or threaten us. Let's be the church. Let's be the best of the church. Let's stand up and fearlessly pray. Let's stand up and fearlessly worship. Even if we have to do it like this until our Bishop says that it's safe enough to get back out there, or in fill the CDC says that things are calming down a bit. That's just precaution.

In the midst of the precautions, let's be fearless. Let's do things that only the church can do. Not because we want to have everybody pat us on the back so we can get credit for all the good things that we do. But because we want others to see Jesus in us, it's our goal that they find Jesus. Whether they already know him and are shaking in their boots because they have yet to discover what he really has to offer, or because they haven't met him at all. We're surrounded in our communities by people who do not have peace because they do not know Jesus. We do, let's spread the peace. Let's find ways to reach out.

A lot of us like to bake. Bake a loaf of bread and leave it on your neighbor's door step. At a time when people are fearful that they can't find bread in the grocery store that loaf of bread may bring a smile and a sense of peace. And when they know that we have given it to them out of the love of God and the compassion that we have. It could make all the difference in the world.

Let's pick up a pen and a card and write a hopeful message to a neighbor and stick it in the mail If we feel like we should go out. There are a host of things that we can do to exercise our faith and to show that the virus is not in control.

God is in control.

I want to share this one last verse with you. From John chapter 14, verse, 27.

Jesus says, "Peace I leave with you, my peace I give to you. Not as the world gives, do I give to you. Let not your hearts be troubled, neither let it be afraid."

Let not your heart be troubled, neither let it be afraid. When the world gives us things, it gets to us in a temporary fashion and then those things are pulled out from under us. And that includes the false sense of peace this world has to offer.

But Jesus, he gives real peace. Lasting peace. Today, in the midst of everything that's going on in our world and always. And let's live in that peace.

The Lord bless you and keep you.

The Lord make his face to shine upon you and be gracious unto you.

The Lord lift up his countenance and give you his wholeness and his peace.

Amen

Folks have a peaceful enjoyable day at home. At present we are looking at the church being closed through Friday, the 27th, and we will be back in worship on the 29th together again. Take care and know that you are loved.

Pastor Sandy and Joel signing out. God bless.