

"God Help Us In These Uncertain Times"

Dealing With Fear, Anger and Evil

Wednesday 13 October 2021

6:30 PM-8:00 PM

Opening Prayer

Background

"The LORD is my shepherd; I have all that I need. He lets me rest in green meadows; he leads me beside peaceful streams. He renews my strength. He guides me along right paths, bringing honor to his name. Even when I walk through the darkest valley, I will not be afraid, for you are close beside me. Your rod and your staff protect and comfort me. You prepare a feast for me in the presence of my enemies. You honor me by anointing my head with oil. My cup overflows with blessings. Surely your goodness and unfailing love will pursue me all the days of my life, and I will live in the house of the LORD forever." *Psalms 23:1-6 NLT*

"So we can say with confidence, 'The LORD is my helper, so I will have no fear. What can mere people do to me?'" *Hebrews 13:6 NLT*

"So don't be afraid, little flock. For it gives your Father great happiness to give you the Kingdom." *Luke 12:32 NLT*

In our last discussion we saw that doubt is an expected component of our journey of faith. In this session we will confront the truly negative and destructive forces that plague us: fear, anger, and evil. These are the forces that would separate us from each other and from God. These are the forces we must overcome together.

Fear is a common, perhaps ever present, force in our lives. If it were not so, we would not have so many calls not to fear. Every translation of the Bible with which we are familiar tells us to "fear not" at least one hundred times. "Fear not" is the most frequent command of Jesus to his disciples. So, this is important. But why?

Fear is the opposite of faith. Where there is fear, faith is not strong. Where faith is not strong, the peace that Christ offers us is not in abundance. Uncertain times bring about fear and we cannot predict what lies ahead. We see fear all around us in our world today. It leads to destructive behaviors, irrational actions, actions that do not show the love of God. But, faith in the promises of God casts out fear. We pray to God to overcome our fears.

Closely related to fear is anger. They are members of the same family. The first recorded murder in the Bible was because Cain feared that his brother Abel was gaining favor over him. His reaction, anger, which led him to kill his brother. Anger and its consequences are throughout the Bible. These are lessons for us. But we are often not attentive students. Why is that?

"And 'don't sin by letting anger control you.' Don't let the sun go down while you are still angry, for anger gives a foothold to the devil." *Ephesians 4:26 NLT*

Evil is the third destructive force that is a reality in our world. While we cannot assign the current pandemic to evil, it certainly has revealed evil in our society. Evil is always associated with human actions. It does not occur spontaneously. Evil is that force which strives against the plans of God. In the Christian scriptures that force is personified and sometimes given the name Satan, or the Devil.

Whether you believe the force of evil is external and enters people to carry out its actions, or believe that evil exists within us, it is real.

Ron Higdon puts it this way, "We are all capable of so much good and, yet, there is a darker side, a shadow side, to our natures that frightens us. 'It just wasn't my best self today,' is something we all have said." What are we to do about this enemy from within?

"Therefore, put on every piece of God's armor so you will be able to resist the enemy in the time of evil. Then after the battle you will still be standing firm. Stand your ground, putting on the belt of truth and the body armor of God's righteousness. For shoes, put on the peace that comes from the Good News so that you will be fully prepared. In addition to all of these, hold up the shield of faith to stop the fiery arrows of the devil. Put on salvation as your helmet, and take the sword of the Spirit, which is the word of God. Pray in the Spirit at all times and on every occasion." *Ephesians 6:13-18 NLT*

Questions to Consider

1. Have there been times when you were aware that someone was attempting to manipulate you by promoting fear and anger? What did you do?
2. What do you fear most today? Why? How are you dealing with that fear?
3. What are the ways you control anger towards others in your life?
4. Are you more or less likely to experience fear and anger now than two years ago, or is your experience unchanged? Explain.
5. God says, "Don't be afraid, for I am with you. Don't be discouraged, for I am your God. I will strengthen you and help you. I will hold you up with my victorious right hand." *Isaiah 41:10 NLT* Is that assuring to you? Explain.
6. How do you explain the force of evil within us? It seems to have been with us from the beginning and continues strong today, expressing itself in many ways. What can be done to defeat it? Will we ever defeat it?

Closing Prayer