

“Let go . . . and let God”
1 Samuel 17:32-49 and Mark 4:35-41

“Why are you afraid? Have you no faith?”

Daniel was afraid!

Daniel LaRusso was afraid of Johnny Lawrence in the 1984 movie, “The Karate Kid”. For those who do not know the story, Daniel had moved from New Jersey to southern California. Daniel has no friends and has a couple of run ins with Johnny and his friends, students at the Cobra Kai dojo. One night, Daniel is beaten up by Johnny and his friends until Mr. Miyagi intervenes. Mr. Miyagi is a kind and humble Okinawan and a black belt karate master. Daniel finally is able to persuade Mr. Miyagi to teach him this art, so that Daniel can protect himself.

On the first day of his lessons, Miyagi asks Daniel to wax and polish several old cars that he owns - wax on - wax off. Daniel spends the day following the instructions - wax on - wax off.

On the second day, Daniel is instructed how to paint the fence - paint up - paint down. Again, it takes all day.

On the third day, the porch of Miyagi’s verandah is sanded in a circular fashion - and again it takes all day.

At the end of the third day Daniel has had it - “I’ve done all this work for you and you haven’t taught me any karate.”

At this point the master tells Daniel to stand in front of him and do the motion for wax on - wax off. As he does this Mr. Miyagi tries to hit him. His blows are deflected by the boy’s arms.

The boy's work for Mr. Miyagi - his obedience - has made him ready for his first lesson in how to face his fears; it has prepared him for the lessons, and the dangers, that follow.

In the course of our lives there are many things that cause us to fear. There are giants who are hostile and there are storms that threaten to overwhelm us.

For each of us the dangers are different - the things we fear, vary from person to person, and the intensity of our fear also varies.

I know people who are afraid to drive on the highway and others who dread getting into a boat. Some people fear being alone, some fear spiders and others fight against the giants of addiction.

There are many dangers out in the world and its right that we fear these dangers. Fear is a natural reaction; a God given reaction, to those things that threaten us.

Fear is natural, but if it is listened to, too much - it can lead to paralysis.

Fear can prevent us from dealing with what threatens us; and it can allow the thing we fear, to destroy us; not just our bodies, but our hearts, and our minds, and even our very souls.

That is what was happening at the time when the Philistines came to make war on Israel during the reign of King Saul.

The Philistines came with their champion - Goliath. He was huge, over nine feet tall and he was well armoured. Each day he challenged the Israelites to send a man, a champion, against him and whoever won their fight - his side would win the war, would that be a good outcome or a bad outcome. And each day the Israelites fled at the sight of him.

All were afraid, none would go forth to do battle, except David. He was the youngest of his family. He had been relegated to tending his father's sheep while his older and bigger brothers conducted business and served in King Saul's army.

On the 40th day, David was carrying provisions to his encamped brothers and he sees Goliath and hears his challenge. David is shocked that no one will oppose him and volunteers to take up the challenge.

David had a hard time convincing Saul to allow him to do this. Saul is sure that the boy is too small, too inexperienced. But David tells him that he can prevail, he tells how in tending his father's sheep he has killed lions and bears - and that with God's help, he will defeat Goliath.

David defeats Goliath, not with a sword, not with a helmet, or the coat of mail; that Saul wanted David to wear, but with the instruments that he used as a shepherd; a sling, a stone and these words '...I come against you in the name of the Lord Almighty...'

When we practice the ways of God and trust in his name, we can overcome our enemies; we can overcome our natural fear and do what must be done.

The trick - if it can be called that, is to gain a perspective on the danger we are in; to understand that God is able to help us - and that God will help us, that God has power over the wind and the waves. God can still the storm and calm the troubled waters. God can triumph in the face of overwhelming odds because God is the Lord of Hosts - the God who is over all.

When I was much younger, I used to get into a little bit of trouble when I would come home from school at lunch or following the 4 o'clock bell. I used to doddle, but only when I was coming home, I liked to play. I'd play marbles on the way home, until they got taken away from me for a dodling.

It was winter and I was dodling home after school. We had had a light dusting of powder snow, that had fallen on the frozen ice surfaces. The snow made sliding on the ice fantastic, really long slides.

I wasn't always able to stay standing, but I always bounced right back up. One time I slipped and hit my forehead and up I jumped. It was different this time. There on the ice, where my head had hit, was some red stuff. I took my hand to my forehead and there in my hand I discovered blood, my head was bleeding.

I had been dodging on the way home, I had cut open my forehead; if I hadn't dodged I wouldn't have cut my forehead - oh boy, I was afraid that I was in trouble

I hustled home and entered the house as quietly as I possibly could. I went straight to the bathroom to get a facecloth. It didn't do much good, the blood was gushing!

That's when I heard my dad come in from work. He saw the blood that had dripped onto the floor and asked, "What's happened?"

I was afraid that I'd be in deep trouble, I didn't have faith that my parents loved me, because I was a dodger. Their reaction forced me to ask, why I didn't have faith in their love for me. I should have known better.

Dad pulled the skin together with a band-aide, my mom cleaned up the mess and then all of us went to St Joe's emergency, where 7 stitches were used to close the laceration.

It is that way with all our fears - with all the dangers we encounter.

We have to look to the solution instead of only looking at the problem if we are to overcome the odds that are so much against us, if we are to overcome the fears that prevent us from acting.

I was on the Design Team for Canada Youth 2012, but we started preparing for the event in October of 2010. A total of 16 people, all with lots of different ideas, met for the first time. That first weekend, we had to get to know 15 strangers, take in all our experiences, differences and preconceived ideas, and distill them down so we could agree on one theme, not an easy task. That first weekend was very busy. Jeff was acting as one of the facilitators and used a phrase that I remember to this day - "...let go, and let God..." He wanted all of us to let go of our own prejudices, our own ideas and let God guide us toward the theme for CY2012.

It was a marvelous and liberating experience - to let go - and to let God. To trust that God would guide our efforts in making the right decision. We didn't have to worry about how we were going to do what we wanted to do, all we had to do was let go and let God guide. We didn't have to do it all on our own, we just had to decide to allow God to help.

I think that most of us fear being out of control of any situation, meeting forces that are greater than we are and not being able to do anything about them.

- Daniel was afraid of Johnny and his friends and didn't have faith in 'wax on, wax off';

- I was afraid of the consequences of dodging, I didn't have faith that I was loved;
- I was afraid to let go and let God, I didn't have faith that God would be present and guiding;
- Saul was afraid that David couldn't subdue Goliath, his faith in God wasn't as strong as David's;
- the disciples were afraid of the storm, did Jesus really care that they not drown.

We fear what we do not know. We fear what we cannot control. And when you really think about it, we cannot control what will happen from one minute to the next.

David knew from where his strength came, he knew who was in charge, who could help him:

Yea - thou I walk through the valley of the shadow of death, I shall fear no evil, for thou art with me, thy rod and thy staff they comfort me.

When you grow afraid, when you doubt that you will be able to take another step, when you feel you will surely perish; remember God is fully able to help you. Just as God helped David slay Goliath, despite the overwhelming odds, just as Jesus calmed the storm that threatened to overcome the small boat, so God is present with you to overcome that which would overcome you.

Wax on - wax off. Pray - read - meditate and worship, for these things centre us in the living heart of our loving God, providing for us an anchor which keeps the soul steadfast and sure and a rock which cannot move.

Let go . . . and let God!