

YOU DON'T HAVE TO BE AFRAID

- A. Introduction: If you're regular viewer of our Friday night livestream, then you recognize that this isn't our usual setting. We're streaming from the backroom of our home.
1. Because of the national emergency that has been declared due to the corona virus pandemic, we are foregoing our weekly meeting for the next several weeks (three as of now), as per the President's request.
 - a. Tonight I want to share with you words of comfort and hope from the Word of God, the Bible. These are scary times. People are afraid—and understandably so. Can you believe that we're talking about and experiencing a pandemic?
 - b. Over the next several weeks I want to give you some reasons why—although there is a very real issue coming at us (both the disease and the economic repercussions)—we don't have to be afraid.
 - c. We could do in depth teachings on each point I'm going to make. That's not my purpose, however. I just want to briefly encourage you that we will survive. We will get through this.
 2. Fear is an emotion that is generated when we encounter some potential danger that is bigger than the resources available to us to protect and provide for ourselves. But, even when something fearsome comes your way, when you know that you have what you need to meet the challenge, fear melts away.
 - a. Isa 43:1-2—God's message to His people is always: Fear not. Fear not for I am with you. These words are the answer to our fears because nothing can come against us that is bigger than God. And He will get us through until He gets us out.
 - b. The key to dealing with fear is changing your perspective—the way you see your situation. When you become convinced that God is with you and for you and that nothing can come against you that is bigger than Him, that's when fear vanishes.
- B. Part of changing your perspective so you can mitigate the fear you feel in fearsome circumstances is having an understanding of what is happening and why. God has given us a book that gives us this information. Let me start with the big picture and then we'll get specific as to the crisis the world is currently facing.
1. You first must understand that a plan is unfolding, a plan devised in eternity past before this world even existed—God's plan to have a family with whom He can live in loving relationship. Eph 1:4-5
 - a. That's the reason for creation. God created men and women to become His sons and daughters and He fashioned the earth to a home for His family. However, both the family and the family home have been damaged by sin. Gen 2:17; Rom 5:12; Rom 5:19
 1. Adam, the first human being, chose independence from God. As the head of the human race and earth's first steward, his actions had a catastrophic effect on the race resident in him and on the earth itself. Adam's sin damaged both the family and the family home.
 2. But God immediately promised the coming of a Redeemer who would undo the damage done by sin and restore God's family and the family home. That Redeemer is Jesus Christ.
 - A. Jesus came to earth 2,000 years ago to pay for man's sin by dying on the Cross. Through His death and resurrection Jesus made it possible for sinners to be transformed into sons and daughters of God through faith in Him and His sacrifice.
 - B. Jesus will come again in the not too distant future to renovate the family home (this planet) by cleansing it from all corruption and death. He will restore it to a fit, forever home for God and His family. Jesus is coming back to complete the plan of God.
 - b. When Jesus was here two millennia ago, just a few days before He went to the Cross, several of His first followers asked Him what signs will indicate that His return is near. Matt 24:3—Tell us... what will be the sign of your coming and of the end—that is, the completion the consummation—of the age? (Amp)
 1. We're in the age when things are not as they are supposed to be, not as God intended them to.

And God is not going to leave them as they are.

2. Matt 24:4-8—Jesus answered their question by listing a number of things that will precede His return. Among them are famines, earthquakes, and pestilence (or plague—epidemic disease causing a high rate of mortality).

- A. Jesus compared the signs of His return to birth pangs or labor pains. v8—With all these things the birth pangs of the new age begin (NEB). Labor pains start out light and far apart but they increase in frequency and intensity as the birth nears.

- B. Labor pains aren't pleasant. But no one freaks out when they begin because they understand what's happening. A process is underway that will get worse before it gets better, but the end result is wonderful—the birth of a baby. And, the mother will survive the labor pains.

2. The world is beginning to experience labor pains or birth pangs. We're on the verge of something really big and really good. A monumental change is coming.

- a. The return of Jesus Christ to this world is very near and His return will culminate in a wonderful transformation for this planet resulting in what the Bible calls the new earth—this earth cleansed from all corruption and death. Isa 65:17; II Pet 3:13; etc.

1. All the hell and heartache that has plagued humanity from the beginning of time will come to an end. The Lord will bring an end to all sorrow, tears, pain, sickness, and death. Life will finally be what we all long for it to be. But there are some rough days ahead before the birth is completed.

2. Jesus said that fearsome times will come on the earth. But He exhorted His followers not to be afraid. He instructed us to be elated in joyous expectation because the plan of redemption—deliverance from sin, corruption, and death is about to occur. Luke 21:9; 26-28

- b. The Bible has a lot to say about world conditions at the time of Christ's return. In the Book of Revelation the apostle John was given information by Jesus about events on earth and in Heaven just prior to His second coming.

1. One of things revealed to John was that there will be a worldwide system of government, economy, and religion in place (Rev 13). The Bible predicted globalization. Globalization was beyond anyone's imagination (not even possible) when those words were written.

2. Sir Isaac Newton (1641-1727) the English mathematician, physicist, and philosopher, who discovered the law of gravitation, was a devout Christian. He was very interested in Bible prophecy and the second coming.

- A. He predicted, based on what he read in the Bible about what the world will look like when Jesus returns, that men would one day travel at speeds exceeding 50mph in a day when horse and buggy was the mode of travel.

- B. Dan 12:4—But you, Daniel, keep this prophecy a secret; seal up the book until the time of the end. Many will rush here and there, and knowledge will increase (NLT).

- C. Here we are today experiencing a global pandemic, with the world's economy shaking because we're all so tied together. We can travel from continent to continent in a matter of hours.

- c. Two points: One, the need to handle this problem as a world community moves us farther down the road to globalization. Two, the fact that we are seeing predictions from the Bible come to pass before our eyes assures us that we can trust other things it says.

C. Now that we've made some points about the big picture (the fact that we are moving toward the end of this age and the return of the Lord Jesus to renovate and restore this world), let's talk about the specifics. How can we deal with the fear that we feel as we face the uncertainties ahead. Consider these thoughts.

1. One, we will get through this. This is not the end of the world or the end of society as we know it. We, as a country and as a world community will come out on the other side of this. This is a birth pang and it will stop. The end is not yet. How do I know?
 - a. As I said a moment ago the Bible gives us a lot of information about world conditions when Jesus returns. Jesus said that when He does come back to earth people will still be eating, drinking, getting married, planting and building. Normal life will carry on. Luke 17:26-30
 1. Based on other signs given of the nearness of Jesus' return (lessons for another time) we are very close to that time.
 2. If society completely collapses and has to rebuilt from the ground up it would take too much time to dig out of it and set up functioning world order for Jesus to come back to.
 - b. I Thess 5:3—The Bible says that when Jesus returns people will be proclaiming peace and safety (lessons for another time). The world will have a sense of security (albeit false). Because of the corona virus and its economic impact, people worldwide don't have any sense of security. But it will return.
2. Two, the most effective way to deal with fear (including fear of death) is to look at the worst case scenario and ask yourself: Is this bigger than God? The answer is always no because nothing can come against us that is bigger than God—including death.
 - a. If we're honest about it, at the root of most if not all fear is the fear of death. This may kill me or someone I love.
 1. But God showed His power over death to us in and through Jesus. Jesus triumphed over death by coming out of it. He did so in part to deliver us from the fear of death. Heb 2:14-15
 2. For someone who knows Jesus Christ, when you leave your body at death, you enter a place called Heaven.
 - A. And, in connection with the second coming of Jesus you will return to the new earth (this earth renovated and restored), be reunited with your body raised from the death to live with God on earth forever.
 - B. The apostle Paul, a man who visited Heaven many years before he actually died, called death a departure that was gain and not loss. This knowledge made him fearless in the fact of his own impending execution. Phil 1:21;23; II Cor 12:1-4
 - b. We're all going to die at some point. It's just a question of when and how. It's part of life in a fallen world. Since the beginning of time, millions and millions of people have already taken that step. Those who are presently in Heaven would tell us that we have no reason to fear death. This perspective helps us deal with the fear ultimate fear.
3. Three, the Bible is in large part a history book. Over 50% of it is history. It is a record of God's interaction with human beings as He works out His plan to have a family through Jesus.
 - a. The Bible has numerous accounts of real people who got real help from God in the midst of real problems. They are recorded in part to give each succeeding generation hope in the midst of really challenging circumstances. Rom 15:4
 - b. Many of those accounts tell of people who were facing starvation and deprivation because of economic upheaval.
 - c. Consider two examples in I Kings 17. There was a famine in the land of Israel (where most of the events reported in the Bible occurred). The famine occurred because of drought and the drought was the result of decisions made by ungodly, unwise leaders.
 1. The Lord directed a godly man named Elijah (a prophet of God) to a brook that still had water in it and directed ravens to bring him bread and meat two times a day. v2-7
 2. When the brook finally dried up, God directed Elijah to the home of a widow woman in the village of Zarephath. She was almost completely out of food. She had enough flour and oil to

make a last meal for herself and her son, and then they would die (v8-12). Elijah told her not to be afraid, but to bake him a loaf first—and then she and her son would have food (v12-15). She put the things of God first and God multiplied her flour and oil until the famine was over.

3. That's consistent with what Jesus said in Matt 6:25-33. We don't have to worry about where the necessities of life will come from because we have a heavenly Father who will take care of us as we seek Him.

D. Conclusion: There's a lot more we could say—and we will say next week. But consider these thoughts as we close for tonight.

1. If you don't know God in a real way, this is the time to get serious with him. Rough days are ahead for this world. The birth pangs will continue. But God's promise to His people is that He will get us through until He gets us out. (More on this next week.)
2. God's message to His people is always: Fear not for I am with you. Nothing can come against you that is bigger than God.
 - a. This doesn't mean that there aren't times when we feel afraid. Fear is a normal reaction to something scary. "Fear not" doesn't mean don't feel afraid. It means that we don't let our fears determine our view of reality or our response to life's challenges. We let God's Word dominate.
 - b. King David of Israel wrote: What time I am afraid, I will trust in you, I will praise your Word (Ps 56:3-4). In the face of fearsome circumstances we chose to believe what God has said despite what we see and feel.
 1. I Pet 1:5—In the context of the second coming of Jesus the apostle Peter wrote that we are kept by God's power through faith. Faith is trust and confidence in God.
 2. This is the time to feed your faith and not your fears. Faith comes to us through God's Word because it shows us what He is like and how He works. It gives us His promises. It shows us the way things really are. It shows us the end result.
3. God's plan of redemption is about to be completed. The labor pains have begun. Keep the end result in mind. God will get us through this.