

FEAR PSALM 118

In the story of creation found in the Book of Genesis, we read where Adam and Eve had partaken of the forbidden fruit, something which had been specifically denied to them. Knowing that God is searching for them, they attempt to hide. It is a scene perhaps reminiscent of many of our childhoods when we had done something that we were not supposed to, and we literally hid from our searching parents. Finally, God finds them, as we know that He will, for, after all, where can we go to hide from God? God asks them why they are hiding. Do you remember the response that Adam gave: "Because I was afraid?"

I think this very poignant story reminds us that fear is so basic to who we are as humans, it goes all the way back to the beginning of time. To be human is to experience fear.

There seems to be no limit to our fears. In a peanuts cartoon strip Charlie Brown goes to Lucy for a nickel's worth of psychiatric help. She proceeds to pinpoint his particular 'fear'. Perhaps, she says, you have hypengyophobia, which is the fear of responsibility. Charlie Brown says no. Well, perhaps you have ailurophobia, which is the fear of cats. No. Well, maybe you have climacophobia, which is the fear of staircases. No. Exasperated, Lucy says well, maybe you have pantophobia, which is the fear of everything. Yes, says Charles, that is the one!

Sometimes we feel like we are afraid of everything. We are afraid of ourselves. We are afraid of people. We are afraid of the future. We are afraid of the past. We are afraid of life. We are afraid of death.

Every person, every Christian, must fight their own fears. Even Paul, the sturdy Christian warrior, had to do so. Paul had fallen flat on his face in Athens. He did exactly what he intended not to do, and in his own eyes he had failed. He wrote of his arrival in Corinth: "For when we came into Macedonia we had not rest, but we were troubled on every side; without were fightings; within were fears." Paul was full of fears, just like you and me, the fear of inadequacy, the fear of failing.

But perhaps the most surprising fear of many people and one that we do not like to address is the fear of God. It is the fear that God is not really on our side. It is the fear that God will put us out on a limb and leave us.

It is not a new idea. One of the great fears of the ancient people was that God would fall asleep. Can you imagine such a thing? When the prophets of Baal could not get their Gods to rain down fire on the top of Mt. Carmel, Elijah taunted them: Maybe your God is asleep, he said. On the other hand, the Jews took great comfort in the fact that the God of Israel neither slumbered nor slept.

Over and over again the message of the Bible is fear not. When Abram took his family to the Promised Land, he feared that he was turning his back on everything he knew, his security for the unknown. God spoke to him: Fear not Abram, I am your shield, and your reward will be great.

When the Jews stood at the Red Sea and could see Pharaoh's chariots coming on the horizon, they cried out that they would all be slaughtered. Moses said to them: Stand still, fear not, and see the salvation of the Lord.

When the angel of the Lord came to Mary and said that she would bear a child, she trembled with fear. What would become of her? Said the angel: Fear not Mary, for you have found favor with God.

Fear not! Fear Not! It is how we would like to live. How do you do it?

1. First, we must confront our fears.
2. Second, we must understand that too much doubt can sink us.
3. Third, we must remember that regardless of what happens, God will be with us.

We have nothing to fear because God's steadfast love endures for ever. God neither slumbers nor sleeps and is always with us.

God bless,
Pastor Barbara