

It is I; be not afraid (Quality: Good)

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Preacher: Mercer, Seth (1930-2017)

- [0 : 00] In so much to need the Lord's merciful help, I must venture in directing your thoughts to the Gospel of John, chapter 6, reading verse 20.
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- The Gospel of John, chapter 6, verse 20. But he saith unto them, It is I, the not afraid.
- It could be rightly said that every one of us here in the house of God this morning are the subjects of fears.
- And this, of course, is known in the lives of tiny babies, little children, children, young people, parents, indeed every one of you that are here.
- [1 : 42] Right through to our age friends. We are all the subjects of fears.
- Of course, there are people who will always boast that they do not fear anything or anyone.
- And perhaps, indeed, I am sure that there are also here those who, in reflection in their lives, would certainly remember occasions when such a spirit as this welled up in your heart, as you may have been exceedingly angry with something or someone.
- And you may have had this spirit raging within you that you are not afraid of anyone. But, oh, how different it is with those who fear God.
- Because I am sure it is right to say that everyone that is brought to fear God in their life will then know what it is to be more fearful than ever.
- [3 : 11] God, in his great mercy, has set many fear not.
- They would not be there if our God was not aware of how fearful we often are.
- But then again, I feel persuaded that there are those here that have come with your fear, your fears.
- And perhaps some in a particular way are exceedingly fearful at this present time in your life.
- What a very real fear to a child of God is the fear of death.
- [4 : 25] I do not know how any of you will respond to this thought. But I am sure that if we truly fear God, we shall know what it is to fear death.
- Perhaps there is someone here who is in particular fear of death. We read of those who all their lifetime are subject to bondage through the fear of death.
- It does not mean that they are always in this condition, but it means that they are subject to this condition. And sometimes we fear death.
- And of course, to those who fear God, it is not simply the matter of dying. When our life is taken, it goes much deeper than this.
- And there is this deep concern regarding our souls. A never-ending eternity lying before us.

- [5 : 45] An awareness of the solemn truth that we read of concerning the King of Kings and Lord of Lords in the great day of judgment. As all nations are gathered before him.
- His great white throne. And dear friends, there will only be two divine sentences in that day of judgment.
- One will be, Come, ye blessed of my Father, inherit the kingdom prepared for you from before the foundation of the world.
- Or otherwise it will be, depart from me ye cursed into everlasting fire prepared for the devil and his angels.
- Some of you may respond, I do not know how you will respond to this thought. But it is indeed truth. And that day is coming for all of us.
- [6 : 50] As will the day of death, if the Lord tarries. There is here this morning who have been preserved from death in our lives.
- I have known this personally. And others here have known this and some in very recent days. And yet our lives are preserved from death constantly.
- I am sure that we are so little aware of this and how many times God has had mercy upon us in our lives to spare them from death.
- And what a thought it is that none of the Lord's dear people can die until the appointed time. Indeed it is so with all men. There is a time to be born and a time to die.
- So then there is just this thought with any of you that may be carrying, as it were, the solemn fear of death and how it will be with you.
- [8 : 03] You often live there in your thoughts. How will it be with me? You may feel that ere long the summons will come for you, for you to depart this life.
- But the exercise that you have is prepare me, gracious God, to stand before thy face. Thy spirit must the work perform, for it is all of grace.
- Now if that is your exercise, if that is your prayer, it is because there is life in your soul and you feel your deep and solemn need to be prepared for death.
- And you so feelingly understand what follows in that hymn, in Christ's obedience clothes, and wash me in his blood. So shall I lift my head with joy among the sons of God.
- And you know that it will be all of grace if you are found right. Well, only the Holy Spirit can convey this into any burdened hearts and there might even be younger friends that are carrying this exercise.
- [9 : 21] I knew what it was in my early twenties to carry for a long, long time this solemn exercise concerning my never-dying soul and my need to be prepared for death and for heaven.
- My need of a saviour. So I am aware that dear children, dear young people, can and do know what it is even to lay awake at night with this concern, this felt need.
- And so you too have had to pray, prepare me gracious God to stand before thy face. And then of course to those too who know this exercise, you will also know what it is to be tormented by the devil.
- When the Lord permits the devil to come in like a flood and suggests to you that perhaps after many, many years of making a profession or as you have professed the name of Jesus in your very coming and going to the house of God and the devil has come and he's told you that there's nothing in you.
- And what a temptation that is. When the devil comes in like this and says to trembling souls, there's nothing in you. And when you die, it's going to be proved that there's nothing in you.

[10 : 56] And you're going to be lost. Now that is indeed a very solemn temptation. I believe I mentioned this on Wednesday evening when the text was this, and so shall we ever be with the Lord.

And during this past week, a dear one of friends here certainly, we believe, entered into glory. A death came very suddenly for a friend that we think of who attends the chapel at Worthing.

And her friends here, as they went to visit her, they found that she had, as it were, just passed away, suddenly taken.

And we believe indeed that it is true of our late friend, and so shall we ever be with the Lord. But friends, this all happened in the week that's now passed.

And it could happen to any one of us here before another Lord's Day comes round. And we need grace to consider our latter end in the light of eternity.

[12 : 21] The dear children and young people that are here, you need help to consider your latter end. We just think once more of little James Cottingham, scarcely two years old.

And the Lord came and called him, we believe. Jesus called a little child unto him. And this happened in the year that is now passed.

And may you think of this, you dear children, young people, and some of you know this happened. You know that death came to that little boy.

And yet we believe that through the mercy of God, he was prepared for heaven. So whatever our age, whether we have ever been concerned about death and eternity, we certainly need this exercise.

It's no light matter. Oh, that the Holy Ghost would help me to convey this thought to every one of you, that eternity, as we think of it, it is beyond our comprehension, but it is forever and ever.

[13 : 44] Two of our dear friends have lived to reach 90 years of age. But if we think of 90 years in comparison with a never-ending eternity, it is nothing.

And dear friends, this concerns every one of us, our never-dying souls. We each have a never-dying soul that will leave our body when we die.

God's life. So we all need grace that we may ask the question, where shall I spend eternity?

Does it concern you? that we just mentioned on Wednesday evening this very blessed truth concerning the Lord Jesus?

And Jesus is speaking in our text this morning, but he said unto them, it is I, be not afraid. Now we just pursue this thought regarding death and eternity for a few more moments.

[14 : 54] moments. But what do we read about Jesus in the second chapter of Paul's epistle to the Hebrews? We read this, oh, that there might be those with the speaker that we might be led by the Spirit into this as we consider death.

But we see Jesus. But we see Jesus. Who was made a little lower than the angels for the suffering of death, crowned with glory and honour that he, by the grace of God, should taste death for every man.

Now that means for every one of his people. Oh, I would that this might be conveyed into our hearts. Yet, dearest Lord, says one hymn writer, when viewed in thee, the monster, that is the monster death, the monster loses all its dread.

The monster loses all its dread. And this we believe to be the portion of every living soul as they come to die. We believe it was so with little James Cottingham.

We believe that the monster death lost all its dread. And that child died in peace. And his dear parents felt this peace, the peace of God, which passeth all understanding.

[16 : 32] You know, dear friends, as time goes on in this solemn position that I'm found in, I'm more and more concerned about your never-dying souls.

And I'm concerned about every one of you when you come to die. That weighs upon my heart. You see, we need a religion that will stand the storms of life and the storm of death.

This is what we all are going to need. Are you concerned about it? We need help to lay up many, many prayers against the day of death. And yet, for every child of God, the Lord Jesus has tasted death for them.

He gave his life upon Calvary. They could not take it from him. I lay it down of myself that I may take it again.

This commandment have I received from my Father. But the Lord Jesus has tasted death for his people. And I think as it has come into my thoughts of that, what a verse it is concerning death, death is no more a frightful foe.

[17 : 59] Since I with Christ shall reign, with joy, I leave this world of love for me to die again.

Now friends, that is what we are all going to need. I know I have spoken like this in recent times, but I must convey this to you.

See, this is the religion that we need. Death is no more a frightful foe. It is. It is to mankind, dying men and women.

It is a frightful foe. But it isn't a frightful foe to all the Lord's people. Death is no more a frightful foe, since I with Christ shall reign.

With joy, I leave this world of love for me to die is gain. So then, this is recorded of Jesus.

[19 : 05] But we see Jesus who was made a little lower than the angels for the suffering of death, crowned with glory and honour, that he, by the grace of God, should taste death for every man.

Now, he's tasted death for his people. But the Lord Jesus rose again from the dead. He was to be the firstfruits of them that slept.

The grave could not hold him. Death could not hold him. But he rose from the dead. And all his dear people, they will rise with him in the great day of the resurrection.

And then it goes on to say this of Jesus, For it became him for whom are all things, and by whom are all things, in bringing many sons unto glory.

And we might rightly say many daughters. may we consider this, it is of, be not afraid. He brings, he has brought many sons and many daughters unto glory.

[20 : 27] He has brought them there. He gave his life for them. He gave his life upon Calvary for them. He has suffered death for all his people.

And what does it say concerning this? To make the captain of their salvation perfect through sufferings. I have sometimes thought of dear Peter in John chapter 21.

And there the Lord speaks to him. He says, Thou canst not follow me now, but thou shalt follow me hereafter. And in that word there is this, the Lord signified by what death he should die.

He was going to suffer dear Peter when he came to die. But he speaks to him by what death he should glorify God.

You know friends, this has been an exercise to me for some years now. we do not know what the Lord may bring upon us to bring us to death.

[21 : 42] But he will bring whatever his purpose, whatever it is, whatever disease, whatever illness, whatever complaint, the Lord is going to bring it upon every one of us.

And yet, oh, to have such an exercise that in death we might be favoured to glorify his name. He says to Peter by what death he should glorify the God of his salvation.

And surely we need this exercise that we might be enabled to glorify our God in the fires of life, in life, and when we come to die, that we might pass that river telling the triumphs of our King.

King. And then one more thought from this word in the Hebrews, because it is the word of God, and I hope the Lord will use it.

And this is what is said of our Saviour, for as much then as the children are partakers of flesh and blood, he also himself likewise took part of the same.

[23 : 00] May we consider this, that our Saviour, he came into this world, he was born, obeyed by birth mysterious, but he was born as we have been born.

He condescended to do this, came into this world, he was laid in a manger. The condescension of our God in this, but the Lord Jesus took upon him a body like unto our body.

Friends, he knew what it was to walk this earth, he knew suffering, he knew pain, he knew weariness. We read of him in John chapter 4 and Jesus being wearied with his journey, sat thus on the well.

There was a purpose in it, to meet with a dear woman, to make it known that he was her Saviour. Oh, that it could be like that here today. But the Lord Jesus then walked upon this earth with a body like ours, sin accepted.

He was sinless. And if one might use such expression, this was why he suffered as he did in his holy soul and in his body.

[24 : 19] He suffered being tempted, he suffered in his life, and oh, how he suffered in his death. Now, there's going to be suffering.

We shall not escape suffering. And yet, if we could be favoured to view it in this light, for as much then as the children are partakers of flesh and blood, he also himself likewise took part of the saying that through death he might destroy him that had the power of death, that is the devil.

What a solemn truth this is. And yet, the devil is a conquered fire. Oh, how many a child of God has been harassed upon their deathbed by Satan.

He's been permitted to come in like a flood, perhaps in the last hours of a person's life. And yet, oh, the Lord help me to convey this to you, that your Saviour, I venture to put it in this way, that your Saviour has suffered death for you.

He's tasted death for you. And to this end, that through death, he might destroy him that had the power of death, that is, the devil, and deliver them, who through fear of death, were all their lifetime subject to bondage.

[26 : 03] And I'm sure there are those here, I believe there are children here that have already been made to feel something of this. You've known what it is to have the fear of death.

But what has it done for you? Has it made you pray? Has it made you pray like that little girl that I've mentioned a number of times, scarcely four years old, and yet brought by the Holy Spirit to pray like this, wash me and I shall be whiter than snow.

And if we have been brought to pray like that little girl, we shall reach heaven. She was scarcely or about seven years old when she died, and yet in the years, you see the Lord's mercy to that child, in the few years that her life was spared, and yet those few years were a preparation for heaven.

She went on praying, wash me and I shall be whiter than snow. Do you know what it is to go on praying like she did? I'm going to ask you all a question here.

I wonder how many of us have been brought to pray like that, wash me. You feel your need to be washed from your sins. You know that you need washing.

[27 : 36] You know that you need cleansing. You know that you need to be prepared to die. So then in the context of this, but he saith unto them, it is I, be not afraid.

I have told you before of how Mr. Hayler many years ago, in preaching that Jireh tempted in, he told us of a dear lady that he had visited on her death bed.

She was dying with cancer. And he went into the room and the dear woman was praising God. What was she praising God for?

Now this is true what I'm telling you. She was praising God for the cancer that God had brought into her body.

Why? Why was she praising God? Because she said it was the means he was using to take her to glory.

[28 : 51] Oh friends, does that touch a cord in our hearts? if we were to learn that we had cancer very shortly in our life, the Lord alone knows how we would respond to this.

My own doctor, during the last year, he said one in three of the whole population were in this, that they could well develop this dreadful disease.

I hope you'll bear with me as I speak like this, but none of us know what is going to come. But friends, what we need is this, we need a religion that's going to stand.

You see, this is what we're going to need, a religion that will stand in these things. again, I've said this before, but the Lord may use it.

Dear Mr. Fensham, who is now with us here with his second wife, though the Lord has said to him, come ye apart and rest a while, but his first wife, it was discovered that she had cancer of the liver.

[30 : 09] And as they left the hospital that day, she said to her dear husband, I am not prepared to die. And within about three weeks, her life was taken.

But in that three weeks, or however long it was, the Lord prepared the dear lady for heaven. She suffered much in this, the process of dying, and yet, not long before she died, she was able to say this, the sands of time are sinking, the dawn of heaven breaks, the fair sweet morn I sighed for, that blessed morn had come, you see, and she died in the Lord.

I had not thought that I was going to speak as I have this morning, but it has just come into my heart, as it were, and therefore I have spoken to you. you see, these things we need to be brought home from our hearts, for if your heart is anything like my heart, we tend to react like this when we hear solemn things, we tend to think it will never come to me.

Now isn't that true? There's that within our fallen nature that says it will never happen to me, but friends it may happen to you. this is the thing.

Well, in all this, and much more that might be conveyed, but he saith unto them, it is I, be not afraid.

[31 : 55] It is I, be not afraid. And if we should be favoured, and I hope we shall be favoured, when we come to die in it, and of course one would not only think of it like this, but it's with me to speak as I have, whatever the Lord may send, to take us home, we trust to glory, and if then we are able to say, to hear his voice, it is I, this is all in my hand.

I hope he will say to souls here this morning, that your affliction, whatever it is, it's in my hand, dear friends. well to try and close this morning by perhaps speaking a word to the little ones and the children.

And I know that you have your fears, I think of the little ones in those early formulative years, when you are constantly with your mother, and you see, even in very early life, children have their fears, you have your fears, you know what it is to be afraid.

I'm sure that all the parents that are here, you all know what it is for your little ones to come to you when they are afraid. There's something wonderful in this.

A little child will run to its father or mother, they know who to run to, and that in itself is a wonderful study. Oh, how wonderful it is, little tiny babies, little children, oh, how soon as it were, they learn, they know who their mother is, they know who their father is, and you see, they will go to them.

[33 : 48] Well, you dear children that are here, you have your fears. I think of those of you that are at school. There may be those here, you have perhaps what would be thought of and is a particular exam, and it's you, this lies before you during this very year.

And of course in your studies at school, you will know times when you do not know how to do your studies. And you may well go to a teacher, you may well come home and speak to your parents about this, but you know what it is to be afraid.

And I'm sure all of you dear children and young people, you also know what it is to be afraid because perhaps of other children at school.

In every school there have always been the bullies. There ever will be. And you may be very fearful of a particular child or person.

And of course in the way that I've spoken, your fears concerning your soul as the Lord has touched your heart. But I would just seek then that you might hear the voice of God speaking to you this very Lord's Day morning.

[35 : 12] But he saith unto them, it is I, be not afraid. So dear children, dear friends, take it to the Lord. Take it to the Lord.

Jesus ready stands to save you. Jesus is always ready to listen. And it has been said of course through the generation that the knocker on the door of mercy is low enough for the tiniest child to reach.

So take it to the Lord in prayer. And if you should hear the voice of Jesus saying to you, whatever your fears it is I, be not afraid.

The Lord will work for you. The Lord is still the Lord of heaven and earth. There's nothing that he cannot do.

And in closing perhaps we just think of all of you. You may have some particular fear. You may be fearing something in this coming week.

[36 : 19] There might be those that perhaps are dear for an operation. There may be those that have something in your body that is such an anxiety to you.

You may even have got to the point where you think well perhaps I better go and see the doctor. You may have something that's with you today and it's causing much fear.

And yet if the Lord should come. But he said unto them it is I. Be not afraid. I am in control. I am your Lord your Saviour.

I will be with you. Your troubles to bless and sanctify to you. Your deepest distress. Fear not I am with you.

Fear thou not for I am with thee. Be not dismayed for I am thy God. I will strengthen thee. Yea I will help thee. Yea I will uphold thee with the right hand of my righteousness.

[37 : 25] Amen. Amen. Amen. Conclude our service by singing hymn 1102 Why those fears behold, tis Jesus, holds the helm and guides the ship, spread the sails and catch the breezes sent to waft us through the deep, to the regions where the mourners cease to weep.

Hymn 1102 P intervenes in hum■■■ Amen.

Amen. Amen.

Amen. Amen.

Amen. Amen.

[41 : 53] Amen. Amen.

Amen. Amen. Amen.

Amen. Gracious God, we do believe that there are fearing, trembling souls in thy house here this morning in all kinds of ways.

But Lord, thou knowest our hearts in this. We ask once more that thy voice may be heard through thy word, that trembling souls may be delivered from their fears, that they may hear thy voice saying to them, It is I.

Be not afraid. Lord, do grant this. We do ask for thy help this afternoon in our Sunday school. Be with our superintendent and our teachers, Lord.

[44 : 13] Help them to go on sowing the seed of thy word. For thou hast said, he that goeth forth and weepeth, bearing precious seed, shall doubtless come again with rejoicing, bringing their she is with them.

We ask, Lord, that much prayer might be given for the service this evening. Oh, that we might gather together under the sacred influence of the Holy Ghost.

We think, Lord, in our closing prayer of our dear friends who have moved home during the past week. We believe, Lord, that their burden has been, if thy presence go not with me, carry us not up hence.

But Lord, we believe that thou hast guided them in this, and we do pray that they might hear thy voice even today.

My presence shall go with thee, and I will give thee rest. May the grace of the Lord Jesus Christ, and the love of God, with the communion of the Holy Spirit, be with you all.

[45 : 31] Amen.