

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

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Preacher: Mercer, Seth (1930-2017)

- [0 : 00] I'm feeling so much to need the Lord's merciful help. I venture again 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, be not afraid.
- We commence this morning in seeking to speak regarding the many fears that the Lord's people have in their hearts and in their lives.
- We know this, that mankind everywhere are subjects to fear.
- [1 : 20] It is one of the awful effects of the Adam fall. And this has gone on ever since and will do.
- I'm sure it could be rightly said that the fear that is known by men in a general sense is fear which is brought by sin.
- But we have been seeking to speak this morning regarding the fears which the Lord's people have, which is so different to natural fear.
- Natural fear, fear which is caused through sin, has torment. But the fear which is known in the hearts of those that have been quickened into life by the Holy Spirit is the tender fear of God.
- And we have a hymn that speaks of this precious grace and it says this, Fear is a grace which ever dwells with its fair partner love.
- [2 : 46] So I'm sure that I am on scriptural ground when I speak of the Lord's disciples here in their fear that they knew what it was to tremble.
- And whenever we are brought to graciously fear, we shall also tremble before God in it and with it.
- Well, we went on to speak of some particular fears that are known in the lives of the Lord's people. We spoke regarding perhaps particularly the fear of death.
- I've no thought of attempting to go into this again this evening, only perhaps just to read a verse from the second chapter of Paul's epistle to the Hebrews.
- And therefore, concerning Jesus, concerning Jesus, forasmuch then as the children are partakers of flesh and blood, he also himself likewise took part of the same 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.
- [4 : 18] And I can assure you, dear friends, that if there's life in our soul, we shall not be a stranger to gracious trembling and fearing in the light of eternity and our solemn need regarding our never-dying souls that we may be found in Christ, the only place of safety.
- Washed in his precious blood, sheltered beneath it, and clothed in his righteousness. We also sought to speak to the children and young people that were here regarding their fears and their need.

And how to children who know what it is in their young lives to tremble and to fear graciously before God.

And they too are found, as it were, in such a word as this, but he saith unto them, It is I. Be not afraid.

Well, just one further thought regarding fears. In this sense, the Lord knowing what your fear is.

[5 : 45] Any of you here tonight. And I'm sure that if you were to speak audibly, you would say, Yes, I have a fear.

It may be a particular fear that lays with weight upon your heart. Something that is now with you. Something that lies before you in your life.

Things that perhaps have come into your life. And so you've come to chapel today with this burden upon your heart. And I'm sure you will have come seeking Jesus in this.

And as we sang in our closing hymn this morning, perhaps the Lord would just have me to mention the opening words in that hymn, 1102.

Why those fears? Behold is Jesus. Holds the helm and guides the ship.

[6 : 47] Spreads the sails to catch the breezes. Sent to waft you, to waft us through the deep, to the regions where the mourners ceased to weep.

And then thinking of you then in this sense, we just convey God's word to you once more, but he saith unto them, It is I.

Be not afraid. It is the Lord. I believe we might rightly take up that particular word here. The Lord says, It is I.

Be not afraid. Surely we may be able to declare this to you. It is the Lord. And that really will cover everything that's in your life.

And every fear. And every exercise. It is the Lord. This that is upon you. This that is with you. It is the Lord.

[7 : 48] And if you are given grace to say, Let him do what seemeth in good. And if you are favoured in this, you will fall into his hand. And you will be able then, I believe, to say this, Sweep to lie passive in his hand, and know no will but his.

And that is indeed a sacred place to be brought to. Well now this evening, as we venture again with the word, but he saith unto them, It is I.

Be not afraid. This same account is found in three of the Gospels. In Matthew, and Mark, and John.

And each account that we have, has teaching for us contained in it.

And it is, with the Lord's help, the teaching that is found in these three particular accounts of this same time in the life of Jesus with his disciples.

[9 : 08] The first thought that we seek to convey is found in verse 15, here in this sixth chapter of John's Gospel.

When Jesus therefore perceived that they would come and take him by force to make him a king, he departed again into a mountain himself alone.

The Jewish nation, in awaiting the Messiah, indeed, I'm sure it was so with his disciples, from time to time, they were expecting the Lord Jesus to come and to set up his kingdom on the earth.

They were looking for deliverance in an earthly sense. And it was this that they were constantly seeking.

But dear friends, the Lord Jesus makes it very clear to us, my kingdom is not of this world. He did not come for this act.

[10 : 20] He came into this world to save sinners. This is why he came. I come to do thy will, O my God, for thy law is written in my heart.

And I believe there is teaching in this for us. You see, when Jesus perceived that they would come and take him by force to make him a king, he departed again into a mountain himself alone.

Now, what I would just bring to your notice here is this. Oh, how we need grace to be enabled to constantly take the lowest seat in our life.

The Lord Jesus tells us, I am among you as one that's serving. A servant, though the Lord of all, and I think of a word that's found in the prophecy of Jeremiah, it may be a word for someone here tonight.

Seekest thou great things for thyself? Seek them not. The Lord Jesus was ever bringing before the people their need to glorify God, their need to seek first his kingdom and his righteousness, their great need, as it were, to lay their case and their cause into his hand and whatever he may do for us in our lives that we may know that and be able to say what hath God wrought.

[12 : 01] So then we have, I feel, an example here of the Lord Jesus. He departed again into a mountain himself alone.

May we be given grace to take the lowest seat. I often think of that that is recorded, indeed I have read it quite recently at home, that that is recorded in Luke's Gospel concerning this matter as I feel it to be.

And this is what the Lord said. And he put forth a parable to those which were bidden when he marked how they chose out the chief room, saying unto them, Now the teaching of the Lord Jesus is this, we need grace to be humbled under the mighty hand of God.

We need grace, constant grace, to take the lowest seat. And so he says here, When thou art bidden of any man to a wedding, sit not down in the highest room, lest a more honourable man than thou be bidden of him.

And he that bade thee and him come and say to thee, Give this man place, and thou begin with shame to take the lowest room. But when thou art bidden, go and sit down in the lowest room, that when he that bade thee cometh, he may say unto thee, Friend, go up higher.

[13 : 36] Then shalt thou have worship in the presence of them that sit at meet with thee. For whosoever exalteth himself shall be abased, and he that humbleth himself shall be exalted.

Well, dear friends, the Lord has given us an example. Master, wash your feet, ye also to wash one another's feet.

He departed into a mountain himself alone. He had no desire or wish to be made a king here. He was the King of kings and the Lord of lords.

And he has set us an example. We are in a far safer, happier place when we must go into our closets and shut the door about us.

Now that is where we need to be more often. That is the place that precedes blessing. Now trying to convey God's word then concerning this word, but he saith unto them, It is I, be not afraid.

[14 : 51] Well, the Lord knows then what you may be afraid of, what your fears are today. But I would seek to come at once to God's word in this.

What do we read in Matthew's gospel and in Mark's gospel concerning this same account? Well, there is this. The Lord constrained his disciples to get into a ship and to go to the other side.

Fulfills the need just to read it as it is recorded. In Matthew's gospel, and it says there, and straightway, Jesus constrained his disciples to get into a ship and to go before him unto the other side while he sent the multitudes away.

Well, whatever your fear may be, or whatever may be with you tonight, in your heart and in your life, the Lord help me just to bring this to your notice.

How did this that's upon you tonight begin? This is very important teaching. You see, if we can look back in our life to know through experience that the Lord was in the beginning of a thing, whatever we may come into at a later date in our life or in our experience, if we know this, that the Lord was in the beginning of this.

[16 : 39] And if the Lord was in the beginning of a thing, he will be with you in it, he will carry you through right to the end. I trust that this may be a God-given thought for all of us.

Because I'm sure there are those here who have your fears, you may have a particular fear. But friend, how did this begin with you? You may have some special fear in your business life perhaps.

To those of you here that are in business and all that that means today. But how did you begin your business life? Did it begin with God?

Did it begin with prayer? There are many trials in business life and we would not only confine our thoughts here to those that are in business, but to those of you here that are in business as you serve in businesses and in your lives.

There may be those here in particular fear and distress regarding their life. It may be in the office, it may be connecting you with your life, whatever you're in, your profession.

[18 : 03] But whatever it is, how did this begin with you? Did it begin with God? Did it begin with prayer? Did you see the Lord's hand in guiding you in this?

You see there may be others here who may be in particular fear concerning their present occupation. We have often heard in more recent years of what is known as redundancy.

And sometimes it can happen suddenly. a man can be made redundant as it were in a moment. It can be so unexpected. And what a thing it is.

There might be those here and in your daily night. There may be the things, the pressures of business today and all that that means. And the whole situation I feel in our country in this is becoming more and more orientated toward just seeking more and more money, more and more profit and people that are working in many professions today, they're being driven in these things.

So whatever your fear might be in this connection, did the Lord direct you into it? Or if this may search some here, you may have to respond and say, well I didn't pray about this when I entered into it.

[19 : 34] But oh, has the Lord since touched your heart and you feel so differently now to what you once felt and your one great concern now is this, you need the Lord's help, you need the Lord to be with you.

You may be very fearful about becoming weak or things that are happening in your life, you may be wondering where the scene will end. And of course in so many other ways, if we think of it concerning our need in our soul, there may be those here that are being severely tempted, severely tried.

You may have been brought into spots and places where you really wonder if there's anything in you and the devil has come in like a flood and he has told you there is nothing in you and he's told you that events are going to prove this and oh the awful feeling that accompanies such temptation.

But let me ask any of you that are in distress regarding your soul this evening, you would have to acknowledge, you must acknowledge this, you did not begin a work of grace in your heart.

Who did begin a work of grace in your soul? Well, you know this, it wasn't anything to do with you.

[21 : 09] You know this, it wasn't anything to do with man. It was not the will of man that my life's new heavenly birth began, says the hymn writer, I believe.

And in the first chapter of John's Gospel, we are told there it is not of him that willeth or of him that runneth, but of God that showeth mercy. There may be those here too tonight that may be in distress concerning things that are happening in your home life, with your family, and in other ways.

But again, I try to convey this to you. How did all this begin? Did Jesus constrain you to get into the ship? It may of course have been connected with movements in your life.

You may have been moved by God in providence. And all that that meant to you. There may be those here even in this, that the things that happen in connection with your moving, and all that was bound up with it, of course it meant another home for you.

And all that this exercised your soul regarding your movement, but oh did the Lord tell you as he spoke through his servant Paul in Athens, that the bounds of our habitation are fixed.

[22 : 44] Maybe those that are in distress concerning their life in this way. And you may have been wondering, have I done right? Did we do right in this? Are we in our right place?

Is this indeed the Lord's hand? Well, if you're favoured to consider this in the light of God's word, word, and straightway Jesus constrained his disciples to get into a ship and to go before him unto the other side while he sent the multitude away.

And I can assure you of this, dear friends, that if the Lord was in the beginning, he will never leave you. You may be severely tested even to die, but if only the Lord might speak through his word to you, but he saith unto them, it is I.

Be not afraid. What happened to them when they launched out into the deep? We're told in Mark's gospel that he saw them toiling and rowing.

The Lord saw them toiling and rowing. You see, the Lord was watching them from the mountain where he had gone to pray. The Lord was watching them.

[24 : 09] He saw them toiling and rowing. He knew that they would never cross the lake without his divine assistance. He saw them toiling and rowing.

And friends, he still sees his people toiling and rowing today. And I venture to go a step further and say that he has seen you toiling in rowing.

He's seen your distress. He's seen how you feel to make no headway in this journey. He sees how there's so much opposition to you in one way or another.

You have the opposition of your own sinful heart. You have the opposition of the devil. You have the opposition of the world itself. These opposing forces.

And of course we find this also recorded in this particular chapter, the sixth chapter of John's gospel. What does it say there?

[25 : 14] It says this. And what a word it is. It was now, for it was now dark and Jesus was not come to them.

Another aspect of this journey across the lane. For it was now dark and it was now dark and Jesus was not come to them.

Well does that describe your case this evening? Do you feel to be walking in darkness? Do you feel to have no light? do you feel as though darkness surrounds you?

You may even feel that this is a description of your case as it was with Abraham in his day and horror of great darkness enveloped him.

And yet you see Jesus was watching. Friend, Jesus is watching you. You may be feeling me in the dark and it was now dark and Jesus was not come to them.

[26 : 29] You see this is the thing that you're looking for. This is that that you wait for. This is the only thing that will help you go on in your journey. Whatever it might be, it is to have the presence of Jesus.

But perhaps you are here and you said but the Lord is gone and I am left to walk alone in this dark wilderness. But again I just remind you of this was Jesus in the beginning.

You know I have such a feeling in my heart as I stand here at this moment that there are those here that are in distress. And I feel that if you go home tonight and if you should take this thought home that the Lord was in the beginning of all this.

And that the trials, the temptations, the sorrows that you have encountered and may yet be in, but it's all in his own divine hands.

Think of a word in the book of Job here, he causeth it to come. Whether for correction or for his land or for mercy.

[27 : 43] And if you go home with it, he causeth it to come. The Lord has caused this to come upon you in your life. And you are in the right way.

You are in the narrow way that leads to life eternal. It was the Lord who brought you from darkness to light and from the kingdom of Satan into the kingdom of his dear son.

man. Then another thought concerning this particular journey as recorded is this. And we are told in Matthew and I believe in Mark's gospel this.

And in the fourth watch of the night Jesus went unto them walking on the sea. Now the Lord help us to consider this, the fourth watch of the night.

And I understand that this would be about three o'clock in the morning. Now the Lord waited. the evening was now come and Jesus departed into a mountain alone.

[29 : 05] Think of it evening, early evening I believe it would mean. Think of how the night came on. Think of the night season.

Think of the time of waiting. Now Jesus didn't come until the fourth watch of the night. And it may well be the fourth night, the fourth watch of the night with you.

And yet you see the Lord came to them. He came in the fourth watch of the night. And what do we read in this?

And in the fourth watch of the night Jesus went unto them walking on the sea. And when the disciples saw him walking on the sea they were troubled saying, it is a spirit.

And they cried out for fear. Now in this we have the Lord Jesus as the eternal Son of God.

[30 : 11] And to my understanding it means this, that the Lord himself, he literally walked on the sea. and this is why they cried out with fear.

See, their poor finite minds couldn't understand this. Friends, the Lord walked on the sea and he would have, as it were, very similar to what is recorded in Luke chapter 24, with the two disciples on the Emmaus road.

he made as though he would have gone further. And in one of these accounts here, we have it, it seemed as though he was going to walk past them.

They cried out for fear. Well, have you been crying out then in fear? I wonder if any of you have been perhaps especially fearful during the week that's passed.

You've wondered where the scene would end. You've been in distress. You've been brought very loud. But as it is recorded in Psalm 107, he brought down their heart with labour, they fell down, and there was none to help.

[31 : 32] And then what do we read? Then they cried unto the Lord, in their trouble, and he saved them out of their distresses. You see, they cried out in the fear of their souls.

The time is almost gone and I must soon leave it. But I think here too, dear Peter, as it's recorded in Matthew's Gospel, there we find the man, as he's made aware that it's his Saviour walking on the sea, and if you've been made aware that it's your Saviour that's walking on the sea in your life.

And may I remind you of how Peter reacted to this. What did Peter say to his Saviour? He said, Lord, if it be thou bid me come unto thee on the water.

Perhaps the Lord has been speaking like that to someone here. And you have said, Lord, if it be thou bid me come unto thee on the water. Lord, bid me come unto thee in all that lays upon me.

And the Lord said to Peter, come. But you see, he too could walk on the water. How did he walk on the water? Peter, he walked on the water as his eyes were fixed on Jesus.

[33 : 04] We shall only be able to walk on the water in our life as our eyes are fixed on Jesus, dear friend. Lord, if it be thou bid me come unto thee on the water.

And Peter, he steps onto the water. He begins to walk to Jesus. But oh, as soon as he saw the waves and the billows, he cries out to his saviour, Lord, save.

Lord, save me. I perish. And Jesus stretched forth his hand to save him. You see, Peter had something to learn in all this, and so have we.

And it's only as we keep our eyes fixed on Jesus. Friend, you'll never get anywhere without this. And so the Lord saved him.

And not only did the Lord save him, but as soon as he came into the ship, the wind ceased.

[34 : 08] The wind ceased from its raging. What have we been singing in our third hymn this evening? Loud roaring the billows, now nigh overwhelmed.

You may be there in your feeling, but skilful's the pilot that sits at the helm. You see, your Lord is still with you. And one thing I would notice particularly in closing, but he saith unto them, it is, I be not afraid.

And then what do we read in verse 21? come. Then they willingly received him into the ship, and immediately the ship was at the land whither they went.

Now there's teaching in this. Do we know what it is to come to this same experience in our life? Oh, how thankful we are when the Lord draws near to us, when the Lord comes to us.

Maybe those here, you've really felt this during the week that's passed. The Lord has drawn near, he's come to you. Now, this changes the whole scene.

[35 : 37] Then they willingly received him into the ship, and immediately the ship was at the land whither they went. Now, to my heart, that speaks like this.

They were favoured to fall completely in the Lord's hands, and as soon as they were brought to this, immediately the ship was at the land whither they went.

And I'm going to say this in closing this evening to any of you that are burdened carrying some particular fear or exercising your life, if you are given grace to fall completely into the Lord's hands, you'll prove that he will work for you, he will appear for you.

Is anything too hard for the Lord? Friend, there's nothing too hard for the Lord. And I believe there are those here, I may never hear this, but I believe there are those here, you're going to prove this, it may be tomorrow, it may well be in some future day, but friends, you're going to prove that as grace is given to fall as it were into the Lord's hand, he'll work for you.

Amen. May we help to conclude with hymn 261.

[37 : 29] It is the Lord enthroned in light whose claims are all divine, who has an undisputed right to govern me and mine, hymn 261.

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[39 : 45] CHOIR SINGS CHOIR SINGS CHOIR SINGS CHOIR SINGS CHOIR SINGS CHOIR
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bless you.

God bless you.

God bless you.

Amen. Lord, our only hope is that thy blessing may attend thy word. Lord, thou knowest our hearts, and thou knowest, Lord, just how it is with everyone that's here.

And we have that inward feeling that there are those here today, this evening, Lord, that are in distress, that are in need.

[42 : 44] To thy holy will.

We believe, Lord, then thou wilt work for us. We ask it in thy name, with the pardon of every sin.

May the grace of the Lord Jesus Christ and the love of God, with the communion of the Holy Spirit, be with you all.

Amen. Amen.