

Don't Let Your Heart Be Troubled

Thanks for joining us today. Obviously I wish we could all be together to worship and pray and fellowship but I hope seeing some familiar faces will remind you that just because we can't be together in one location, we are still the church, still the body of Christ, still connected to one another through prayer and through our love for God and for one another.

We have been in a series of messages on the King and His kingdom however, given the circumstances, I wanted to break from that and share a word of encouragement with you. Obviously we are in a crisis, an unprecedented storm. I was working on this message Thursday morning as news came that the first fatality occurred in Tulsa to a Berryhill resident. We were watching the reports about our dear friend Greg Mundis, the director of Assemblies of God World Missions who tested positive for Covid19 and who is battling for his life in Springfield, Missouri. I could feel anxiety and fear just rising up in my heart, in my gut. You may have felt that way or you may be feeling that way now. If so, hear the word of the Lord from the gospel of John. Jesus said, **“Do not let your hearts be troubled. Trust in God; trust also in me.” John 14:1** I remember Bishop Frederick Hardy explaining Jesus was saying, “don't let trouble get into your heart.” We have to make a choice, a decision to take action and place our trust in God and in Jesus. I choose to rest it all in him and not let trouble get into my heart. The bible says **“Cast all your anxiety [all your cares] on him because he cares for you.” 1 Peter 5:7** We have to choose to cast our cares, our worries about the virus, about the economy, about our job, about our family and friends, about the future, place it all in his hands because he cares for us.

The context of the passage I quoted from John 14, Jesus is preparing his disciples for his imminent death and resurrection and ascension; he's preparing them because he's leaving. They had to feel unsettled, like we feel this morning. Everything must have felt uncertain to them. He said he was going to prepare a place for them and he told them, “you know the way to the place where I am going.” They said, “wait, what? You're going somewhere? We don't know the way. We don't know where you're going. You're giving us way too much credit. We don't know what to do!” That's the way I feel about all that's happening around us. “Wait, what? We don't know what to do. We've never been this way before. How can we know the way?” And Jesus said, “I am the way and the truth and the life.” It sounds to me like we can find the way through these difficult and frightening and uncertain times by keeping our eyes on Jesus. I'll say more about that in a moment. Later in this same chapter, Jesus tells the disciples, **“Peace I leave with**

you; my peace I give you. I do not give to you as the world gives. Do not let your hearts be troubled and do not be afraid.” John 14:27. That’s not a promise there won’t be trouble. That’s not a guarantee that followers of Jesus won’t get sick or die. It is a promise of his abiding presence and peace. He is the prince of peace and he promises to be with us. I can’t make promises about what will happen in the coming weeks, but I can promise you whatever happens Jesus will be with us and his peace will be with us. Because of that, we can say as Jesus said, “Do not let your hearts be troubled and do not be afraid.”

Pastor Sarah has been preaching on Wednesday nights on the book of Revelation, the Revelation of Jesus. One of the things she has repeatedly emphasized is that as trouble and calamity was unleashed on the earth, the important thing to remember was to watch the Lamb. John said, “I watched as the Lamb opened the seals.” I’m not suggesting what is happening in the earth right now is one of the judgments of Revelation, but what I am suggesting is that we do what John did in the Revelation: Keep watching the Lamb! Keep your eyes on Jesus. John said He is at the right hand of Him who sits on the throne. Keep looking to him. And remember what they are declaring concerning the Lamb. **“Worthy is the Lamb who was slain, to receive power and wealth and wisdom and strength and honor and glory and praise.” Revelation 5:12** Regardless of the circumstances, regardless of the pandemic and the fear around us, He is still worthy and all strength and power and honor and glory and praise belongs to him!

I thought of the prophet Isaiah who said **“In the year that King Uzziah died, I saw the Lord, seated on a throne, high and exalted...” Isaiah 6:1.** It was a time of uncertainty. The king was dead! Would there be civil unrest? Who would take the throne? What would happen? But Isaiah looked heavenward and saw the Lord, high and exalted. I don’t know what will happen, but I’m looking heavenward. Keep watching the Lamb. Then we can say, “In the year 2020, in the year of the coronavirus, I saw the Lord, seated on a throne and I knew I could trust him. I knew ultimately everything would be all right.” Keep looking to Jesus and his peace will keep you through all the unsettledness of this present crisis.

The question has been asked, “Is what’s happening in the world, is it the devil unleashing sickness, is it God’s judgement, is it the book of Revelation being fulfilled?” Here’s what I know. Oral Roberts used to tell us God is a good God and the devil is a bad devil. Jesus said the devil came to kill, steal and to destroy, but Jesus came to give us life and that more abundantly. The devil is the one who comes to destroy, but God is the one who redeems every situation. God

is the one who causes all things to work together for good to those who love him and are called according to his purpose. I believe, in addition to keeping our eyes on Jesus and not allowing fear and trouble into our heart, our response in this crisis time is to let God show us ways to redeem this situation, this season.

This is an opportunity for us to be the church. The church is not about a building, it's the people of God. Let's be who we say we are, the people of God. **Let the church lead the way in ministry, helping and serving others.** Pray for each other. Check on one another. Check on your neighbors, check on the elderly and see if they need groceries or assistance in some way. Among our church members we are doing our best to communicate by the internet and social media, but not everyone has internet. Make sure other church members are getting the information regarding services and who to call if there is an emergency. Share resources with others as you are able. Everyone is going to have to sacrifice during this time. Let the church lead the way.

Let the church lead the way in compliance. We sometimes forget the bible says **“Everyone must submit himself to the governing authorities, for there is no authority except that which God has established...Consequently, he who rebels against the authority is rebelling against what God has instituted and those who do so will bring judgment on themselves.” Romans 13:1-2.** I understand there are times when a corrupt and godless government or regime imposes laws that are contrary to God's law and at that time, civil disobedience is appropriate. We are called to a higher law. But that is not what is happening at this time. We are being asked to voluntarily comply with a directive from our local, state and national leaders that we limit group size to 10 and to limit our movement. We are doing our best to comply. We have limited the size of the worship team that gathered. I'm preaching to an empty sanctuary. We are practicing social distancing. Let's lead the way in being compliant. Let's do our best to help minimize the spread of this disease.

Our offices will be closed until further notice but the office number **918-446-0795** will be answered during regular office hours. If you have an emergency, you can always call the emergency number at **918-740-0795**. The pastors are working from home but you can call us as well. We need to lead the way in being compliant and help “flatten the curve” as the doctors have said. As the church let's do all we can to help stop the potential spread of this virus.

Let the church lead the way in prayer. We have been praying each evening at 7:00, 19:00 hours, praying against the Covid19 virus. There is something powerful that happens when the people of God unite their hearts in prayer. It's time for the church to take this seriously. This isn't just about us in Tulsa or in Oklahoma, this is about people around the world. I know we are concerned about shortages in America, a lack of enough ventilators in hospitals, but millions of people around the world have no access at all to such medical help or facilities. The worldwide effects could be devastating. We must pray! Don't panic. Pray! The bible says the effectual fervent prayer of the righteous avails much, it makes a difference. Let the church pray!

I remind you of the instructions the Lord gave to Solomon after the dedication of the temple. God knew a time would come when the hearts of the people would turn away from him, or when they would allow sin to crowd into their heart and crowd God out of their lives. God told Solomon, **“If my people, who are called by my name, will humble themselves and pray and seek my face and turn from their wicked ways, then will I hear from heaven and will forgive their sin and will heal their land.” 2 Chronicles 7:14** It's the church's responsibility to lead the way in repentance. Let's examine our own hearts and lives. If there are things we need to change, attitudes that need to change, relationships that need to be mended, if there is wickedness we need to turn from, if we haven't been “seeking his face”, spending time in worship and prayer and fellowship with the Lord, now is the time to renew that fellowship. It is an opportunity for increased attention and devotion to the things of God. Pray and call upon the Lord and let's believe the Lord that as the church, his people, humble themselves and pray, he will heal our land and turn this terrible plague away from us and from this planet. We don't pray out of fear, we pray out of faith, believing God will hear us and help us as we call on his name.

The president said it was like being a war-time president. The scientists, even the Secretary General of the United Nations this week said we are in a war against this virus. As the church, we know what the bible says about warfare. **“For though we live in the world, we do not wage war as the world does. The weapons we fight with are not the weapons of the world. On the contrary, they have divine power to demolish strongholds.” 2 Corinthians 10:3-4** The weapons we fight with are the weapons of prayer, weapons of intercession, weapons of love and service and good works. Let the church lead the way.

Let the church lead the way in redeeming the time. On a personal level, during this time when many of you are at home, quarantined, use this time to read, to reflect, to re-order the

priorities of your life. Instead of focusing on all the things you can't do right now, focus on the things you can do. I don't mean to sound all "aren't you a glass is half full kind of guy" but you know what I mean. Don't allow despair or depression to defeat you. Finish the projects you've been postponing. Look for ways to bless others. Some are isolated alone. Check on each other. Some are isolated with a house full of children. Really check on each other! Phone calls. Facetime. Zoom. There are all kinds of creative ways to connect. Redeem the time and redeem the opportunity to pray, to do good, to serve the Lord and serve others.

I quoted Sarah at the beginning, keep watching the Lamb. Keep looking to Jesus. Keep looking to him for the long haul. Things in this battle will keep changing, but Jesus is the same yesterday, today and forever the bible says. He isn't changing and he isn't going anywhere.

I want to wrap this up by reminding you of something that happened to Jesus in Mark's gospel. Similar accounts are told in the gospel of Matthew and in Luke. The bible says, "**That day when evening came, Jesus said to his disciples, 'Let us go over to the other side.' Leaving the crowd behind, they took him along, just as he was, in the boat. There were also other boats with him. A furious squall came up and the waves broke over the boat, so that it was nearly swamped. Jesus was in the stern, sleeping on a cushion. The disciples woke him and said to him, 'Teacher, don't you care if we drown?' He got up, rebuked the wind and said to the waves, 'Quiet! Be still!' Then the wind died down and it was completely calm. He said to his disciples, 'Why are you so afraid? Do you still have no faith?' They were terrified and asked each other, 'Who is this? Even the wind and the waves obey him?'" Mark 4:35-41.**

The disciples were in a storm and so are we. Understand, that storm on the sea of Galilee was threatening the same things that this storm of the coronavirus is threatening. **The storm threatened the lives of all on board.** They could all die in this storm. They were fearing for their lives. Mark tells us there were also other boats that were with them. It may have been family members and friends that had been listening to Jesus' teaching and they were all going to follow him to the other side. The disciples may have been fearing not only for their own lives but also for the lives and safety of family members and friends that were on board the other boats.

We can identify can't we? It's a fearful time! What if we get sick? What if a family member or friend gets sick? We've already had friends affected by this pandemic.

Not only were their physical lives threatened, **The storm threatened their livelihood.** These were fishing boats they were traveling in because many of these people were fishermen. They made their living on the Sea of Galilee. If the storm sank their boats, they would lose everything. Their equipment, their means of support, their primary means of transportation even, it would all be lost if the boats were swamped and went under.

Some of you are wondering if you and your family can financially survive this storm. Doors are closed, businesses are shut, planes aren't flying. We're in a storm and we are feeling what the disciples in the boat were feeling.

Not only did the storm threaten their lives and their livelihood, **The storm threatened what they believed about Jesus!** This wasn't what they expected. This wasn't what they signed up for. They must have thought being with Jesus would exempt them from storms, from loss, from covid19. **“Teacher, don't you care if we drown?”**

In frightening times, unsettling times, don't lose sight of Jesus. As I said earlier, keep watching the Lamb. Keep your eyes on Jesus. He was asleep in the stern of the boat. He wasn't afraid. He asked them “why are you so afraid?” We're afraid because we don't know what Jesus knows. But remember he said to the disciples at the beginning, “Let's go over to the other side.” Jesus plans on getting us to the other side. He is going to get us to our destination. We might be a little wet when we get there. Life is like those rides at Silver Dollar City that say, “You will get wet on this ride.” You are going to get wet, but Jesus said let's go to the other side, he's in the boat with us, so we can stop being afraid and rest in the fact that we will get where we are going, right on time.

Don't allow fear to cause you to question or doubt the Lord's love and concern for you. Paul said none of these things can separate us from the love of Christ. I quoted at the beginning, we can cast our anxiety, our care, our fears on him because he cares for us. He loves you and he cares for you and he is going to see you through this season.

Mark tells us Jesus got up, rebuked the wind and said to the waves, **“Quiet! Be Still!”** That's all it took. Three words from the master. King James Version reads **“Peace, be still.”**

In the midst of the strangest time that I can recall in America, can you hear the Master speaking those words to you? Can you hear him speaking that over you today? “Peace, be still.” Quiet! Let Jesus quiet the fear and anxiety in your heart, in your mind and spirit. The Psalmist said, **“Be still and know that I am God” Psalm 46:10** In the midst of all the crisis, quiet your

heart and know that he is still God. He rules and reigns. Psalm 46 opens with these words, **“God is our refuge and strength, an ever-present help in trouble, therefore we will not fear...”** It closes with this assurance, **“The Lord Almighty is with us; the God of Jacob is our fortress.” Psalm 46:1-2, 11**

Don't let your heart be troubled. Jesus is in the boat with us. He will get us safely to the other side. The Lord Almighty is with us and he speaks peace. Let him calm the storm and tempest in your heart and mind. Let him give you his peace.

I don't know what's next or what will be required of us in the near future. But I know this: The Lord Almighty is with us; the God of Jacob is our fortress. It's going to be all right. So don't let your heart be troubled.

Let's pray!