



TIME OF GRACE®

Jesus' Love, My Life: I Can Be Fearless

Study Notes

Summary

Fear filled the hearts of Jesus' friends the night before he died, especially after Jesus' chilling words that someone would betray him. But that made Jesus' promise all the sweeter. He was going to prepare a place for us. He would be the way to get to the Father. We could trust in him when our hearts are troubled. That's the peace we need when we realize the sinfulness of our hearts.

- Our Fear = _____?
- **John 14:1:** Do not let your hearts be troubled. You believe in God; believe also in me.
- **John 14:2-6:** ²“My Father’s house has many rooms; if that were not so, would I have told you that I am going there to prepare a place for you? ³And if I go and prepare a place for you, I will come back and take you to be with me that you also may be where I am. ⁴You know the way to the place where I am going.” ⁵Thomas said to him, “Lord, we don’t know where you are going, so how can we know the way?” ⁶Jesus answered, “I am the way and the truth and the life. No one comes to the Father except through me.”
- Our Faith = Jesus gets us _____.

Points to Ponder

1. “Jesus answered, ‘I am the way and the truth and the life. No one comes to the Father except through me’” (John 14:6). Explain how Jesus is inclusive and exclusive.
2. Google “Bible passages about fear.” What did you find? Which promises did God make in order to help you overcome your worst fears?

3. Study John 14:25-27, words which Jesus also spoke the night before he died. What connections do you see between these words and John 14:1-6? What additional promises does Jesus make here? How could you apply these verses to your upcoming week in order to minimize your fear?

Homework for Next Week

Read John 14:15-31.

Time of Grace Ministry
Jesus' Love, My Life: I Can Be Fearless
John 14:1-6
March 1, 2020

Pastor Mike Novotny

Today, I want to talk about fear and how we face it with faith in Jesus Christ. And so, I want you to think for a second, what are the things that you fear? What are you afraid of not getting? Not reaching in your life? Or not staying in a good place where you currently are?

There's a little sentence I want you to write down if you're taking notes in your program. I think most of our fear is summarized by these two words that begin so many of our thoughts; the words "what if."

What if I don't get this? What if I can't hold onto this? And I might not know everything about your life and I might not know what keeps you up at night and makes you feel anxious or worried but I bet it's a question that starts with those two words: What if? For some of you, your biggest fears might be financial. You think what if I don't make enough money to go to college? What if I go to college but I can't pay off my student loans? What if I want to get married but I can't afford an engagement ring? Or we can't afford a decent wedding? What if my debt combined with your debt is just too much debt? What if we miss a car payment? What if we can't take care of the rent? What if I want to retire and then I get into an accident or there are medical bills that I can't pay? What if? What if things go crazy with the economy again and I have to go back to work after I thought I was in the clear? What if we're fighting in our relationship because of financial things? There's a thousand financial fears that start with those two words: What if.

Or maybe that dog bark in your heart is more physical. What if I keep getting these headaches? What if a specialist can't figure out what's wrong with me? What if the tests come back positive? What if it's cancer? What if mom gets sick and she's not going to get better? What if we have to check her into a facility and what if we don't have the money to pay for it? What if anxiety just isn't cured by the end of the year? What if depression is something I'm going to have to manage and live with and not cure with a pill? What if?

Or maybe for some of you the questions are relational. What if I never find the one? What if my siblings get married and I'm always the one, you know, holding the flowers instead of taking the vows? What if we can't make this relationship work and this isn't just another argument we get past but the one that ends us? What if we're married and we have kids and we've tried counseling and we're still dealing with the same problems? What if our marriage doesn't make it? What if the kids have to live in separate houses and we have to split custody? What if?

Or maybe like so many people, your fears are spiritual. What if I've really messed things up with God? What if he's not paying attention to me anymore? What if the thing I did that I think about so quickly and so often in church, what if God's thinking about it pretty often, too? What if he gave me 100 chances and I turned my back on him 101 times? What if he's not on my side anymore? What if he's not for me and what if I'm not forgiven?

And then you have kids and your fears double because the same financial and relational and emotional and spiritual fears aren't just yours anymore. You're dating someone, you're part of a church, and like, there's a million things that can keep us up at night for us to worry about. And so my question for you today is not, you know, do you have any of those what if questions. Instead, my question is what do you do with your what ifs? Like when you feel that fear and that anxiety is kind of coming into your heart and you're thinking worst case scenarios and fear is like nipping at your heels and barking in your ears, what do you do? Because fear, as the song goes, will steal your happiness and it will rob you of the rest that Jesus died and rose to give to you. So what are you going to do the next time you feel afraid?

Well today, I want to give you Jesus' answer to that question because on the night before he bled, that Thursday night before the cross, Jesus was sitting in an upper room with a bunch of guys who were terrified. They weren't running from any barking packs of dogs but they had so many fears in their heart, part of me wonders if they heard a single word that Jesus preached. Do you know much about that story? In John 11, Jesus decides that he's going to go to Jerusalem to raise his friend Lazarus from the dead. And this sounds like happy news, but Jesus' closest disciples knew what that meant. They were walking back into the hornet's nest; the city that was like buzzing with murderous threats toward Jesus. It was so bad that one of Jesus' disciples said before they left, "Let's go with him and let's die." They thought they might be arrested, too; they might be tortured. They might be stoned or crucified; they might never see their families again. So can you imagine what they were thinking as Jesus says again and again to them, "They're going to arrest me and torture me and kill me." What if they arrest me, too? What if they flog me? What if they pick up stones? What if I never see my kids again?

And so, they went to this upper room to celebrate the Passover meal and they lock the doors to keep the bad enemies outside but then Jesus told them something. The enemies weren't just outside those doors; he said, "One of you will betray me." And they all looked at one another and said, "What if it's me? What if it's you, Peter? Or you, James? Or you, John? What if you're the one to stab Jesus in the back?" And then just when Peter said, "Well, it's not going to be me, Jesus. I'm going to die for you." He said, "Oh yeah, Peter? Before this day is over, you will disown me. You will deny that you even know my name three times." And if Peter, who was like the fearless leader, the bold and the brave one who always stood up in a crowd, if he would collapse under the pressure, what if the rest did, too? And so the sound had to echo in their ears. They were so terrified and afraid; their hearts were troubled. And that's when Jesus opened his mouth and he spoke. He told them exactly how to escape their fears and to find the peace that he had come to give them. Even though your fears are different than those men, I want you to hear Jesus' teaching today so that you know exactly what to do the next time you feel afraid.

So check out in John 14 when Jesus said, "Do not let your hearts be troubled." Another way we could say that is, "Stop it." But Jesus is like a bad counselor, isn't he? I mean, that's a command. That's not - you know, here's a few tools and tricks you can try. He said, "Don't let it happen." You're worried? You're afraid? Stop it.

Can you imagine if I counseled you like that? If we met for coffee and you poured out your heart and you were crying and worried and, "Pastor, I'm afraid," and I just looked at you and said, "Don't." You'd find a new church, wouldn't you? But Jesus is really interesting here. He's somewhat saying that you are not a victim of what your heart feels. When you're nervous and when you're anxious and when you're afraid, you don't have to just sit there until your heart tells you it's okay to have peace. He says, "No, no, no. You put your heart on a leash and you don't let it run down Scared Street. You don't let it get out of your hand and sprint down Worrier's Way. You tell your fear to sit and be quiet and stay because you're going to find peace and rest in God."

Which sounds really incredible, right? But I want to ask Jesus, "Yeah, can you tell me how?" I mean, tomorrow morning when you wake up, are you just going to look in the mirror and say, "Don't. Be at peace." Is that going to work? Well, no. Jesus knows you need more than just like some pep talk for yourself. You need something big, glorious, and beautiful. You need God.

That's what he says next. He says, "Do not let your hearts be troubled. You believe in God. Believe also in me." Jesus says the answer to our fears is faith. It's believing in something. Not just believing in our abilities, our strength, our self. Not just believing in any spirituality or anything in general. He says, no, the key to tackling a troubled heart is believing in God. And I have a feeling if Jesus was typing out the text for our modern Bibles, he would have left the caps lock on in that word: "GOD." Because if you believe in just some like dinky, unimpressive, weak, impotent God, he will never be enough to calm your troubled heart. But if the God that you trusted, the God that is always with you and always for you, is so big and so glorious and so creative and so resourceful that he is better than anything else that you might lose, you have found the key to fear conquering faith. I mean, Jesus knew and he would tell his disciples it's not all going to turn out roses for you. You're not going to be the healthiest, wealthiest, people on planet earth. But here's what I can promise you: God. What I'm about to do for you will get you into the presence of God? And so, if you're worried that the money might not show up, the truth is, it might not but you have God. If you're worried that your health might take a turn for the worst, the fact is it might; it often does. But even if it does, I'm giving you God. At the heart of Jesus' teaching how to conquer fear was this belief that if God would walk into the room, I would have everything I need to be at peace and rest and celebrate and rejoice. And through faith in Jesus, because we believe in him, our hearts don't have to be troubled.

That's a massive teaching so Jesus paints a picture to help us understand the metaphor. He continues with these words. He says, "My Father's house has many rooms." He said, okay, when you're visualizing being in the presence of God, imagine that God the Father has this house and inside the house is a crazy celebration. People aren't worried, they're not scared, they're not afraid; they're in the presence of God. And he makes this incredible promise: "That house has many rooms." I love that phrase for two reasons: The "rooms" and the "many."

Do you love your room as much as I love mine? Actually, I took a picture; I want to show you what my room looks like. Aahh; that's my bedroom. My wife said I had to clean it up before I took a picture so we both wouldn't be embarrassed. You know what I love about my room? It's super minimalist; we don't have like dressers or drawers. We stuff everything in the closet. We have just books and peace. When I walk into my room, aah, I just feel at peace and rest. I think about my marriage, I think about my family, I think about my Bible, I think about my God. In fact, a few years ago, I took a sharpie and I wrote like the theme we have for our marriage, "You first," because putting your spouse first makes you blessed. But just a tip to all you guys out there, you should probably ask your wife's permission before you take a sharpie to the throw pillows in your bedroom. But despite my faux pas, I feel so good when I walk into that room. I don't have to put on like dress shoes or hair product or worry about how I look when I'm in that place. When I go out in public and when I come here to church, I think about those things but in my room, aah. And I bet your room is the same. Ladies, makeup is not necessary when you're in your room. A nice looking dress is not required. You can put on your oldest college sweatpants that would never be seen in public but they feel so good to wear in private because your room is the place where you can breathe and you don't have to impress anyone and you can just be you. And I love the metaphor. Jesus says, "In my Father's house are many rooms." Like when you come into the presence of God, you don't have to stress and try to impress him. You don't have to fake it, you don't have to work for it. You can just sit in this place where God is always happy just to have you there. There's such beautiful power in the little phrase: "My Father's house has many rooms." And you know the thing equally as powerful is the word "many." Because the Father's house is not a boutique hotel. There aren't just 50 rooms for the most faithful Christians on planet earth. When Jesus says there are many rooms, it means there's so much space for a person like you. You might not be the best Christian on your block, in this church, or in your family but thank God didn't say, "My Father's house has a couple of rooms." He says the vacancy sign is always on and when you believe in Jesus, there is room there for you because Jesus reserved a spot.

Look what he says next. He says, "My Father's house has many rooms. If that were not so, would I have told you that I'm going there to prepare a place for you? And if I go and prepare a place for you, I will come back and take you to be with me that you also may be where I am. You know the place to where I'm going." You catch the language? Jesus is talking about a place, a place, a place, where he is, where I am, I will come back and take you to be with me. His whole teaching about tackling fear and calming a troubled heart is about being in the same place that a glorious God is. And he said you can be because I'm preparing a place. A maid might take some time to get a beautiful room in a hotel ready for you but Jesus took some time to prepare you for the room in God's house. And just after the night before he bled, Jesus bled. He gave his life on a cross. He sacrificed everything to make you so holy and so clean and so glorious and so good that you could actually walk into the presence of God. And he wouldn't be mad or disappointed or ashamed of you. His face would light up and he would say "Welcome home."

This is good news, isn't it? But Thomas didn't think so. Thomas heard Jesus when he first preached that incredible comforting message and here was his response. Verse five: "Thomas

said to Jesus, 'Lord, we don't know where you're going so how can we know the way?' Any of you have like really honest friends who like, "Yeah, hi." I've got some people in my Bible study like that who will just like, "Nope, don't get it." Like, "Say that again?" and I try. "Still don't get it. Can you try to teach it again?" Like if they don't get it, they're going to say it and I love that about Thomas. He says, "Jesus, you're talking about this place and the way to get there but we don't even know where you're going. Like how can we type in like the Google maps route if we don't have an address or a location? Like this place sounds amazing but how do we get there and where are we going?" And so Jesus responds to Thomas and what Jesus says next is so famous that some of you when you were little kids, this is one of the first Bible passages you ever memorized. Some people think it's like the top 10 in all of the entire Scriptures; John 14:6. Here's what Jesus said. Jesus answered, "I am the way and the truth and the life. No one comes to the Father except through me."

These words were so famous, not just in our day but in the first century. The early followers of Jesus were not called Christians. Did you know that? They were originally called Followers of The Way because Jesus said I am the way. If you want to come to the Father, if you want to get into his house, if you want to have one of the many rooms in the Father's presence, that's where I'm going, and there's only one way to get there. In the Bible, the word "life" really means to be in the presence of God. If you're far from him, you're spiritually dead. But if you can get close to God, you're alive because of Jesus Christ. And so, Jesus makes this bold, bold claim. If you want to get to the place where your heart can be at rest, there's only one way: I'm the way. I'm telling you the truth how to get everlasting life.

Think of it this way: Imagine that this is God. And that if somehow you could just get close to God, he would be so glorious and so good; if you could just like grasp and glimpse his power and his love and his knowledge, you just wouldn't worry or be afraid of anything. Jesus is saying in this teaching that a person like you and a person like me can actually get close to God no matter what our past or present struggles but there's only one way to do it. Notice Jesus doesn't say, "You know, I'm one of the ways," or "I'm a way." He says, "I'm the way." And so if you think that you can get like close to God and to this better place called heaven just by kind of trying your hardest or not being a really terrible person, you know, you pray on occasion and you donate to the Red Cross, you're not like a total piece of trash. Jesus says, "No, no, no. That's not the way. You should try your best to be a good person but that's not the way to get to God." Nor does he say just be, you know, generically spiritual or religious as long as you believe in some higher power that's good enough, as long as you pray and try to be a good moral person. He says it's good to be spiritual, it's good to be religious, but that's not the way. You say, "Well, if I do my penance or say my prayers or come to church or I give money," well Jesus says, there's some good spiritual practices and some not so good but that's not the way. He says, "I'm the way."

Which is really fascinating to me because Jesus is being shockingly and offensively exclusive and he's being ridiculously and graciously inclusive. He's saying you can't just choose any path, any religion. Because sometimes in our modern age, we want to be so sensitive to other people's feelings from different cultures and different beliefs that we want to accept them but in the process, we start to reject Jesus.

I remember on the trip to Greece, I was on a bus ride from Madison, Wisconsin down to Chicago and I sat next to this woman named Robin. And she found out me and my friend, Nate, were pastors and we start talking and she said, "Do you know what I think is really great? That Jesus accepted that any religion, as long as you're passionate and devout, will get you to God." And I think she read the expression on my face and she knew enough about Christian pastors. She said, "Well, you guys know because you've studied Greek, right? The Greek New Testament? That in John 14, Jesus said, 'I am a way.'" And I had memorized the Greek New Testament so I opened it as quickly, as I had one in my hands, and she was absolutely wrong. In the literal Greek language, Jesus says, "I am the way." And I think that she thought she was being so compassionate by saying to people, "Believe whatever; you don't need to change, you don't have to repent. As long as you're devout." And Jesus would say, "No." To get into the holy presence of God, you have to be a holy person and no one becomes holy by just trying their best or believing in something. You can only be holy if every one of your sins has been taken away.

And yet, at the same time, Jesus is radically inclusive because do you know what he's saying? That no matter what you've done, no matter how bad your struggle, people like us can get to God. If he's the way and he's speaking such words of comfort to guys like Peter, who would deny him, and Thomas, who would doubt him, and James, who would bail on him, if these guys who were not such good people could be offered a spot, a room, in the presence of God, well it means that even though we struggle, there's a spot for us, too. And this is the incredible inclusive grace of this verse that a person like you can come to the Father. And so, even if you've struggled with an addiction in your past, you can actually sit in the Father's house. And even if your marriage is just not what like a Christian marriage should be, you can sit in the Father's house. And even if you're struggling right now with pills or with an eating disorder or with bitterness towards someone who hurt you, you can come to Jesus and there's room for you in the Father's house. You might be mad at God, you might be jealous, you might worry about a thousand things. I don't know what your sin or struggle or what keeps you up at night, but Jesus said, "I'm the way," and so you have a way. You can come to the Father and be in the presence of a forgiving God because I have prepared a place for you.

So summarizing Jesus' answer to our fears, if you're filling in the blanks, let's write this down. Our faith is that because of the blood of Jesus, the death of Jesus, and the new life on Easter morning of Jesus, we have God. And I want you to write that in all capital letters, bold it, circle it, put stars next to it. Like the God who is enough to satisfy your heart, you have him because of what Jesus did. You might not have an easier life, you might not have a healthier life, God might not put a million dollar check in your mailbox but at the end of the day, you have God.

So let's practice. I'm about to throw a dozen "what if" questions at you; things that might make you afraid. And I want you to practice your answer. You're going to shout back to me like you mean it, alright? From the heart, with faith, we're going to tell our hearts not to be troubled. I want you to say these words: "I've got God." And I'm going to say, "What if this?" And when I do this, you're going to say, "I've got God." And I'm going to mess with you; I'm going to say, "But what if this?" And you're going to say, "I've got God." You're going to play the game? Alright, here's what you're going to tell yourself in the mirror next time you're afraid, alright?

What if you get sick and the doctors can't figure out what's wrong with you? "I've got God." Oh wow, that was really good. Holy cow! What if it's cancer and the doctor says you only have six months and you have two little kids at home. "I've got God." What if you're on your death bed and you're worried that you've done too many things wrong in this life and that God can't forgive you? "I've got God." What if he says, "I don't want to be married to you anymore?" "I've got God." What if he gets reelected? "I've got God." What if he doesn't? "I've got God." No matter what happens in our country, don't let politics be the exception to our confidence, alright? What happens if your kid has a disability or a learning disorder or struggles with an addiction or goes through their own breakup? "I've got God." See, it doesn't matter what the "what if." We can tell our hearts don't be troubled, don't be afraid. There's nothing; there's no situation, there's no boss, no coworker, no significant other, no kid who can take away the greatest thing I have in my life because in my Father's house, there are many, many rooms. And if you tell that to your heart - God is with me and God is so good and glorious and he will never leave me and never forsake me - you will find the peace that conquers all the fear in the world.

See, I want you to find in Jesus what my friend Nate and I found in that Greek village. We were stuck and we could still hear the dogs barking in the distance. The tour bus was scheduled to leave our hotel and we were far from it and this pickup truck drove by and we flagged the guy down, this middle-aged Greek man, and you know, we tried to ask him for directions, we were pointing at our hotel, but he only spoke like seven words of English. So you know, he gave us directions back in his native tongue but it was all Greek to me. Okay, I told my wife I had to tell that joke. She said, "You shouldn't," and I said, "Oh, I'm going to." And he's trying to give us directions, we didn't understand him, so eventually we just said, "Can we just get in your truck?" And he kind of looked and he finally nodded so my friend Nate and I, we squeezed into this little pickup truck and I actually took a picture to show you guys. This is the three of us in the truck. And guess what this guy did? He drove past the dogs, he drove up the hill, and he dropped us off right in front of our room.

And that reminds me a lot of Jesus. There are some fears on our own that we just can't get past but today, Jesus is pulling up in his truck and there's room for you. And he'll take you back to the most beautiful, wonderful, thrilling, comforting place. He can take you into the presence of God. So jump in. Do not let your hearts be troubled and do not be afraid.

Let's pray.

Dear God, we ask you for the Holy Spirit today. That might sound nice, that you're still with us, but we want that to sound way more than nice; we want it to be everything that our hearts need. And so, we pray, God, send your Holy Spirit to open the eyes of our heart that when we think about you, your name would be so good and so glorious and so wonderful that your presence would be all that we need. God, we want to be like King David who said if the Lord was his shepherd, he would not be in want and he would lack nothing. If he knew that you, with your goodness and mercy, were pursuing him all the days of his life, he would be okay. We want that kind of faith. We want to be like the Psalmist who said "Better is one day in your courts than a thousand elsewhere." God, if we could just be with you for one day, it'd be better than anything in this world. We want that kind of faith.

God, so when we think about the good things in this life that we really want, help us to remember by faith that you are a billion times better. And even though we might not get those good things, we always have you as our God. We pray for this kind of faith and, Jesus, we especially thank you that we have the opportunity to get into God's presence. There's so many sins where the devil lies to us and says this is the one he can't forgive, but you did. You said "It's finished" and you prepared a place for people just like us. So help us to leave with that comfort and the forgiveness that only grace can bring. We ask this, Jesus, all in your powerful, beautiful name because you are not just the way and the life, you're the truth and you never lie. So we pray this in your powerful name today, Amen.