
Such a powerful, powerful story from so many angles. From the side of Kelly to the side of Donno, that just like for Donno, there is never a time that is too late for you to come back to God. Under any circumstance at any time, God is ready to greet you.

I love Kelly's spirit there, which is the spirit of this church. It's our mission to remove unnecessary barriers that keep people from Jesus. And I love, just like the spirit that she has in her, there is no one who is off limits. There is no one who cannot receive an invitation. There is no one who is too far gone. There is no one who doesn't need the hope and help that can only be found in Him. Come on.

And I think that story translates so well to our Christmas series this year. The title of this sermon series is For All the People. For all the people. And this is a message that I don't know that I would have completely believed growing up outside of the church. And from what I could tell, I believed that this wasn't a place for me. God wasn't for me because of two people, two incidents that kept me from Jesus and His church for 21 years.

What I just want to say right now, I thought that for those years until I came here. It was when I walked through the doors of this church that all of those lies fell and I got to see Jesus for who He truly is. And I got to be welcomed in by a church family. So I just want to take this moment right now and to celebrate all of you who were here 11 years ago to welcome me and show me that God was for me.

I don't think any of us saw me being on the stage after that Sunday, but that's truly the message of God and that's the message of Christmas—God is for all people. Let me show you what I mean. Luke, chapter 2, verse 8 says:

"That night there were shepherds staying in the fields nearby, guarding their flocks of sheep. Suddenly, an angel of the Lord appeared among them, and the radiance of the Lord's glory surrounded them. They were terrified," I bet, "but the angel reassured them. 'Don't be afraid!' he said. 'I bring you good news that will bring great joy...' who is this joy coming to? "... to all people."

This is what we get together every single Christmas season to celebrate, the Good News that a Savior has been born. His name is Jesus. Jesus.

And what we're going to do over the next few weeks leading up to Christmas is to look at these big emotions that we all wrestle with that keep us from believing the truth that God is for us. We're going to look at emotions like: fear and guilt and shame.

And to show that, yes, yes, yes, even in that God is for you. For the fearful, God will meet you in your fears. For the shameful, God will meet you in your shame, and for the guilty God will meet you there in your guilt.

But here's the thing, and some of us in this room and watching online know this, God loves you too much to leave you there. God will not leave you in that fear, God will not leave you in that guilt, God will not leave you in that shame. The Good News that He came to bring on that first Christmas is just as true then as it is right now.

And what we want to do on this first week is to look at:
The Fearful

We want to look at the fearful. And I want us to not just think about a fear, but I want us to think about what it feels like to feel fear. I don't know if there is an emotion that I hate worse than fear. That moment when you are in a circumstance where you don't have control, worry comes, anxiety comes, your body, maybe it tenses up, you get really tight, your stomach falls, and you're constantly looking around. You are in fear.

I also want you to think about this. What was the first fear that you can remember? Think about the first thing that you were afraid of. When I was writing this sermon this past week I started thinking about that question, "When did I really begin to notice fear in my life?"

I'd say the first time I really remember fear had to do with the dark. And not just necessarily the dark but what things look like in the dark. Do you know what I mean? You're looking in your room, you know this room, you know it very well, but in the dark everything could be something else. Like, "Is that a chair or is that a monster with four legs about to come and eat me. I can't be certain."

And growing up, our house, the kitchen was right by the stairs and there was a light switch right there. And if you know anything about dark, the worst place to be is on the stairs. So what you would try to do is hit the lights and be up the stairs before the lights went out, right?

Didn't really work. And also it didn't really help that we had a cat that was from the Devil. She would wait by the stairs and as soon as you would go running up the stairs she would claw the back of your foot so you would really think that you were being attacked in the middle of the night. That's the first thing that I remember.

The second one that I remember was going into middle school. Going into middle school, that was the second big moment that I remember being afraid. Seventh grade, a lot of things change, right? You've got lockers. That's cool.

But the gym situation changed too. You know what I mean? No longer are you wearing the clothes that you wear all day. You had to go in with these other guys, get changed. And you

just hear horrible stories about what happens in the guys' locker room. So I'm on alert, alright? I'm a little nervous.

I'm there, first day, getting changed, putting on my gray-purple shorts and gray t-shirt—go Ben Davis—and I take off my shirt. And the guy next to me takes off his shirt. And I catch from the corner of my eye, my man is covered in hair—from his neck down, just covered.

I'm still not covered in hair, alright? So imagine how I felt in seventh grade looking at this guy. I just immediately covered myself up. I was so fearful like, "I don't belong here. This man could kill me." I don't know why I connected hair with killing, but it happened.

I want you to think about that. What do you fear? You know the older we get, our fears change. I'm not necessarily afraid of the dark anymore. I'm not that afraid of men's locker rooms. If you work out at the YMCA, what are you guys doing? You guys are way too comfortable in there.

But to be fearful—to have fear is human, right? We're going to experience fear. Our fears change. They get more complex. Even when we conquer one fear it seems like another one rises to the surface.

And there are some healthy fears. God has given us fear to protect us from things that aren't safe. Think about this. Think about this idea. You know what the most used command by God in the Bible is? Go ahead. Yeah. It's some version of don't be afraid.

Now, every time I've used that term with my kids or with someone, do you know why I use it? Because there was a reason to be afraid. That's when somebody says, "Hey, don't be afraid but there is a giant snake behind you." Like, "Don't be afraid," but I'm about to give you a reason why.

And that's what I love about God, there's a reason why. It's not that you won't experience fear but here's what God says, "You will not live in fear." And that brings us to the two lies that I want to hit on before we get into our Scripture today. And here are the two lies:

Christians Don't Struggle With Fear

Maybe you thought that or maybe you struggled with fear your whole life and then you came, and you gave your life to Jesus, you got baptized, and it's better but you still feel those emotions springing up now and again. And you're like, "What is this? Did it not take? Do I need to do this again?"

No, we experience fear for all kinds of different reasons. But here's also another lie:

Christians Struggle With Fear Like Everyone Else

And that's the lie that we're going to be hitting on today. It's not the fact that we don't experience fear; it's not the fact that we've been removed from everything that could possibly cause fear in our lives, it's that fact that God deals with our fear, is dealing with our fear, and will one day completely remove that fear for eternity. Alright? Come on.

And what we're going to do today is we're going to look at an account of Jesus and this fascinating account of what He links fear with. We're going to be in Mark, chapter 4, starting in verse 35. If you have a Bible you can go ahead and flip there.

I just want to give us a little bit of context as to what is going on. We're picking up with Jesus in Mark 4. Jesus had begun His ministry. He's teaching. And it's really surprising the way that He's teaching. There were a lot of teachers, a lot of religious leaders, but Jesus does something different. All of the other teachers had memorized Scripture and they knew what it said. But it says that Jesus taught with authority. And everyone was like, "We've never seen that before."

And Jesus is doing these miracles. He's literally meeting people in their fears, in the things that are keeping them from God and from others. He's healing them and He's curing them and He's giving these amazing teachings over and over again. This is what is going on during the day. This is what they have all witnessed.

What we're going to pick up on is what happened that night. Take a look at this:

"As evening came, Jesus said to his disciples, 'Let's cross to the other side of the lake.'" So, before we get into this, I just want to ask you whose idea was it to get in the boat and to go across the lake? This is not a trick question. Yeah, it's Jesus. "Jesus said to his disciples, 'Let's cross to the other side of the lake.'" This is important.

"So they took Jesus in the boat and started out, leaving the crowds behind (although other boats followed). But soon a fierce storm came up. High waves were breaking into the boat, and it began to fill with water. Jesus was sleeping at the back of the boat with his head on a cushion."

I want to pause here for a second. Jesus was asleep on the boat with a cushion, alright? Jesus didn't fall asleep like your dad watching the game, with his arms folded and pretending that he's not really asleep or accidentally falling asleep. If you go to find a cushion, you're going to find a nap. He meant to do this. He went to bed. Jesus is asleep.

"The disciples woke him up, shouting, 'Teacher, don't you care that we're going to drown?' When Jesus woke up, he rebuked the wind and said to the waves, 'Silence! Be still!' Suddenly the wind stopped, and there was a great calm. Then he asked them, 'Why are you afraid?'" And look at what He puts next to that. "'Do you still have no faith?'"

"The disciples were absolutely terrified." They went from being afraid to being terrified. "'Who is this man?' they asked each other. 'Even the wind and waves obey him!'"

So what did Jesus do when they woke Him up? He wasn't happy. To be on His side here, have you ever been woken up from a nap? I'm not at my best either when I get woken up. But it's like, He doesn't even meet them where they are. He's upset. He's like, "Why are you afraid?"

And then He says, "Why do you have no faith? Why do you still have no faith after everything that you've seen?"

What Jesus is doing here is He is placing these two things on opposite ends of the spectrum. We're putting fear on one side and Jesus puts faith on the other side, which makes a ton of sense to me.

Both fear and faith come at the end of ourselves. We experience both fear and faith when we relinquish control, when we've admitted, "I don't know what to do. I don't know how this thing is going to work out. I don't know how we are going to make it through." And what Jesus is saying here is that we all have that choice in the middle of a storm, to either choose fear or to choose faith. And what we choose will grow.

Whatever you decide to focus on in the storm will grow. Whatever you decide to feed will grow. And Jesus makes the case, "You should choose faith."

And I think that makes a lot of sense. I mean, if you think about this in your life, when does fear come in? It's when you are out of control. Say you leave here today and knowing good old Indiana it starts raining out there. It's just a little bit of a rain. You'll pull out your umbrella. It will not stop your day. You'll continue moving forward because you're still in control. You can protect yourself from the little bit of rain that is coming.

But what happens when you go outside and you're just going along but then you see a tornado in the distance. Well, unless you're a dad from the Midwest, you're going to start to panic a little bit, right? You're going to move this party inside. You're going to take control because you know that there is something out there that you cannot control.

And it's in these moments that God says, "I want you to know that I am never going to leave you." This is the message of Christmas that we're going to be hitting on this whole time today, "I am with you." And in those moments when fear wells up in our lives, when we experience fear, God is with us every step of the way saying, "Why are you afraid again? Don't you see that I am right here with you? I always have been." That's the God who we serve.

And what I want us to do, there is so much here in this short story, I just want to take two of the questions that are asked in this text, one by Jesus, one by the disciples, and do a deep dive into each one of them, alright?

So, these are the questions. If you're taking notes this would be a good time to take notes. Just because we don't have a journal for this series doesn't mean that it's not a good discipline to

get into. And I'm telling you, I heard God is going to be asking for them when you get to heaven. That's on you though. You do what you want with this.

The first question is:
Why are you afraid?

This is the question that Jesus asked of the disciples, and I believe it's one that he is still asking of us today. Why are you afraid? And the second question is this:
Who is this man?

This is the question the disciples asked among themselves after they see what Jesus just did with the seas.

Let's just look at the first one: Why are you afraid? And maybe as we've been talking some of the reasons began to bubble up as we thought about our childhood fears or maybe some fears that we are experiencing right now here in this moment.
And obviously in the story the disciples, they are afraid of a literal wind storm. They are afraid. There is an external storm that is going on. And that's the first thing that I want us to look at in this story.

Because while the storms may change, the aspects of the storms stay the same. And it's not just one storm that we are dealing with here. There are actually three.

So the first storm is the:
External Storm

For them it was a wind storm but for you it could literally be anything. This is something that is happening, and it is producing fear. Because before we can identify the fear and what exactly lies underneath the surface we have to know where this fear is coming from.
Maybe for you it's money related. Maybe the bills are piling up and you don't understand how you are going to get yourself out of this storm. Maybe it's a job situation. It's a promotion that you thought you were going to get, it's a career you thought you were going to have, but you don't have it.

It could be health related. Maybe there is a diagnosis that you just received. Maybe it's COVID. Maybe it's an injury that is stopping you from living the life that you used to be able to live. But there is a fear that is created by an external factor.

What is it for you? What's the storm that you are facing? We've got to be able to identify it, to be able to know what it is, because what's out there doesn't stay out there. And that's what gets us to the second storm, which is the:
Internal Storm

And what we're looking at today is the storms that create fear within us, fear or maybe one of its raggedy cousins: anxiety or worry. There is a situation out there that creates this fear inside of us. For the disciples, they were afraid of losing their lives. And I know for some of us here today, that is a real fear that you are going through. Either someone you love or you yourself you are facing it. This fear of death.

But for a lot of us, maybe there's a different fear that we are facing right now in this season. I just want to go over a few of them that I know I struggle with. Maybe you can find yourself in here as well. There is a:
Fear of failure

There is a fear of failure. It's this idea that actually paralyzes you from moving forward because you already believe that you are going to fail, so what's the point?

Life stops being about what's new. It stops being about being creative. It stops being about growth. And what's fascinating about this fear is, it's literally the fear of failure, it's not failure itself. A lot of times this fear will take us out of the game before we even give ourselves a chance to fail. Do you have a fear of failure?

We kind of mask it and try to package it in this idea that, "Well, it's really about being safe and responsible, we just can't afford to risk it." But that's not true. Look at this. When our lives become centered and focused on the fear of failure, if that's what we think about, if that's what we wake up to, do you know what that produces? Fear. More and more fear.

Maybe for you there is a:
Fear of rejection

I know that I struggle with this one. I pray every single time I come up on stage. I pray when I'm meeting someone for the first time, I always have this fear of rejection. I pray every single time I come up on this stage, "God, please remove any fear, anxiety, worry from my heart. God, allow me to go up there and remove any lies that are stopping me from being able to deliver the message that You have given to me." I struggle with this fear of rejection, this idea that I'm never going to be enough.

Maybe you struggle with that. It's this idea that you can work harder, you can try harder, you can do better, but it doesn't matter. At the end of the day, at the end of the week, at the end of the year you are not going to be enough. You can't be the wife, the father, the husband, the mother, the friend, the boss, the employee, the student—you don't have what it takes.

And these fears in our minds just get played out over and over and over again until we get to the point where we believe them. They actually begin to shape our lives. And when the fear of rejection comes, it's going to be accompanied by the fear of loneliness because when you're so afraid of losing people or losing things, you push them away before they ever get a chance to leave on their own.

There's a fear of failure. And once again, if that's what your life has been reduced to, just trying not to fail, that's your goal, you're so close to failure because that's the only thing that you are thinking about. But it's just a matter of time before fear grows bigger and bigger because that's what we're focusing on.

Maybe for you there is a:
Fear of change

There is a fear of change. Now, this isn't just for followers of Jesus, this is true of humanity. Humans are not big fans of change. We love patterns. We love something that we can expect. We live in the grooves that our brains have created. We are creatures of habit. It doesn't even have to be a bad change, just any change. But if I have to ask the question, "What is it going to look like on the other side?" that can bring some uncertainty and fear.

What's it going to look like when the wind stops and the rain stops, what is going to be left? There's a fear of change that stops us from going forward and doing what God has called us to do.

And that's really what I want us to focus on, on this one, this fear of change. Because I believe that there are some followers of Jesus here today who are struggling with this. You are convicted, God is calling you to something, God is calling you to a change in relationships, God is calling you to a change in your lifestyle, God is calling you to a change in your generosity and you feel that conviction, but you fear the change.

You fear what is going to be on the other side and what you're focusing on is what you're going to be missing, not what you're going to be gaining on the other side of it. It's the freedom that God has for you on the other side. And I just want to challenge you right now, address that fear.

For those of you who are in the room, maybe you've been coming for a little bit but you're on the fringe. You're like, "I think I'm almost in. I'm kind of in. I love coming to church. I like the songs. I'm getting better. I raise my hands up a little bit. That's pretty cool. Never did that before. I get some good nuggets. I've got some good Facebook posts, Instagram, helping me with my day to day."

But you haven't gone all in yet. You haven't given God the keys to your life completely because you've been living your life the way that you've wanted to live it for a really long time. And the idea of handing it over to someone else, even if it's God, sounds terrifying.

If you're in that spot right now I just want you to hear this. On the other side of that change that you fear is a freedom that you could not imagine. I believe there are some people in this room at our campuses today who can celebrate and attest to the change, that what is on the other side of this is better than anything you could ever experience on your own.

We have to deal with these fears. Because what's out there doesn't stay out there it makes its way into us. And when it's in us it doesn't just affect us, but it affects our relationships with other people and it affects our relationship with God. That's when we get to the:

Spiritual Storm

This is when these storms begin to shape how we view God. That's exactly what happened with the disciples. These are guys who gave up their whole lives to follow Jesus. They believed He was someone, whether or not they were completely at the point that He is God, they trusted Him. They'd given up their lives for Him.

But they get in this moment, they are pushed beyond a place where they have control, they start fearing for their lives and they begin to question who God is. And maybe that's the season that you're in right now. And that was their question, "God don't you care that we are going to drown? Don't you care that we are going to die?"

And maybe you've prayed that prayer. I've had that thought. Maybe you woke up with it and you walked in here with it today. Maybe this is the question you are asking:

God, don't You care?

God, don't You even care? Do you see me? And maybe that's what you were looking at when you read this story, "Yes, that's exactly what it feels like. It feels like I am drowning. It feels like my boat is taking on water and I'm calling out for God but He's asleep. God is sleeping on me."

But please see this from the story. This is not a story to demonstrate God being neglectful. Jesus sleeping on this boat is to show us Him at peace. That's the picture that we're supposed to get with this. It's not of a God who is absent, but of a God who can sleep in the middle of a storm.

Maybe you are saying, "Who could possibly do that?" The One who is over the storm. The One who has the power to stop it in its tracks. I think for a lot of us we feel that when that storm comes down that it's like God is missing it. "The sun and everything is over there, but God forgot to stop the rain from coming on me. God is trying to juggle all of these balls but maybe He's missing me in this moment."

I think a lot of times that comes because our faith and our theology is coming out of *Bruce Almighty*, where God is answering emails to be able to solve all of the things at the same time. If our God is above time and space He is not dealing with you in the moment. He's not dealing with everything at this rapid pace. He is at peace. He is at rest. And He is welcoming us to enter into that, just like He was on the boat.

Is there anybody who has been in a season in your life where maybe it started in fear and you started to see all of the things that you were going to lose, you were seeing all of the things

that you were not, but then there was a moment in the eye of the storm where you locked eyes with God and His faithfulness drew you in and you began to see that your God was bigger than the storm? Is there anyone here who has experienced that? Who knows that?

Never forget that because that was not a one-time thing. You are going to face storm after storm after storm. Being a follower of Jesus is hard. And don't be surprised when storms come. I love the way 1 Peter says it. He says:

"... don't be surprised at the fiery trials you are going through, as if something strange were happening to you." 1 Peter 4:12 (NLT)

You'd be lying if you didn't say that. When you face a trial, when you face fear, when you face struggles, you're like, "What is wrong in here? What is going on?" God says, "Don't be surprised."

Jesus would say, "Listen, you are going to face trials and tribulations and storms," but what? "Take heart." Why? "Because I have overcome the world and everything that you will ever find in it."

The presence of a storm does not mean the absence of God. Look at this:
God is a shield in the storm, not from the storm.

Alright? God is a shield in the storm, not from the storm. Here's what that means. You're going to be in a season, whether you're in it right now or in the years to come when you are going to be sitting there saying, "God, where are you? My boat is beginning to take on water. The thunder is coming. There's lightning around me. I am beginning to be afraid."

What God is saying here is, "Hey, that boat may take on water, those storms may come, but you will not go under." There is going to come a time when God says, "Peace to the storm."

I'm not saying it will be today. I'm not saying it will be tomorrow. It might not even be in the next season, but God has promised that in eternity all of it will stop. There will be no storms. There will be no fear. There will be no worry. We will be in His peace. But for now God is with us in this spiritual storm.

So just to recap for those who are taking notes and for those who are just starting to take notes now: Why are you afraid? Look at the storms in your life, the external storms. Be able to identify them, trace them back, "Why am I afraid?" Is it money? Is it finances? Is it a job? Is it a relationship? What is it? Is it health? What is it that is causing your fear?

And what is the fear of, really, when it gets to the inside? Is it a fear of failure? Is it a fear of rejection? Is it a fear of change? What is it for you? And then to be able to do a deep dive into that and say, "How is that fear shaping my view of who God is? Am I finding myself saying the same things of God, 'Where are you?' Do I need to be reminded that God is for me, that He is for all people?"

And if I could just encourage you with this, this is fascinating to me. I've been studying this past week getting ready for a series we're going to be doing at the first of the year in the book of Matthew. And it's fascinating. Jesus in Matthew, over and over and over again meets people in their fears.

He meets people in their worse-case scenarios whether it's faith, whether it's family, whether it's health—whatever it is. And I'm telling you, you will find yourself, you will find your fears in one of those accounts. I just challenge you this week as you're going through your life, look through and read the book of Matthew. I think you will find hope and peace.

And that's the first question: Why are you afraid. This is the question that Jesus asked that we have to ask. Then the second question is the question that the disciples asked that we all have to have an answer to. And their question was:
Who is this man?

See, this is the point of the story. This story is not about us primarily. It's not about us and what we should do when the storms come and we're on a boat. It's not about how we can swim better or anything like that. It's not what to do when water gets into your boat. This whole account was taken down, was passed around, was shared for thousands of years because it brought people to this conclusion. When they saw this they thought:

Jesus is God

Jesus is God. I think maybe the disciples had this in the back of their minds, they thought it could be true, but this was the event that would have pushed them over the edge. This is God.

You see, the seas were the most crazy and chaotic places in ancient times. No one felt safe on the waters. It was a gamble, because a lot of times when you'd have to put stuff on a boat and ship it across you were just taking a bet knowing that you were probably not ever going to see that again or to get the profits from it. No one could control the seas. Everyone feared them.

The only One who could do that, the only One who seemed to have control over the waters was God. I want you to think back again about what happens in Mark, chapter 4. Look at this because this is a long history of God doing the same thing. It says:

"When Jesus woke up, he rebuked the wind and said to the waves, 'Silence!'" I love different translations that say, "Peace." He actually stood up in the midst of the storm and He brought peace to the situation. It says:

"Be still!" Suddenly the wind stopped, and there was a great calm."

A great calm, spread across the sea. You've got to think about what the people there would have been thinking. What these disciples, what someone in the ancient Jewish culture would

have seen when they saw someone stop the waters. They would have been thinking about the Psalms like Psalm 89, which says:

"You rule the oceans. You subdue their storm-tossed waves."

This is the same language that is used in the creation story when God began to shape the waters. This is the same language that is used when God is rescuing His people from Egypt and He's taking them through the Red Sea as He parts that bad boy in two. This is only an attribute of God. And when Jesus does this they would have been brought to the spot of, *"This is really Him. This is the Messiah. Jesus is God."*

See, this Christmas season we don't gather together to celebrate and honor some man who lived a few thousand years ago, some great teacher or philosopher. We get together and celebrate for a month straight because we believe that Jesus is God. And it's not just that He is God, it's the type of God that He is. That's what we celebrate here during Christmas.

And this description came hundreds and hundreds of years before Jesus was born. Look at this. Look at what the prophet Isaiah says. He says:

"All right then," I like to read, "Almighty then," "... the Lord himself will give you the sign. Look! The virgin will conceive a child! She will give birth to a son and will call him Immanuel (which means 'God is with us')."

So who is this man? Well, His name is Jesus, but we call Him Immanuel. This is the name we use to celebrate who Jesus is. He is the One who brings peace, the peace that we've been longing for. It's what He brought to the storm and it's what He wants to bring to your life and to mine. He's the One who proves that He is stronger than it all. He is above it all.

We have these moments in our lives when the storm comes. And when it comes, not if it comes, we begin to choose whether we are going to live in fear or whether we are going to be drawn in by faith? Fear will only create more fear. Faith will begin to do something so beautiful in your life. You can't explain it unless you are the one who is experiencing it.

I've seen, maybe more so than anything else in my life, fear steals so much from us. Fear steals all of the good things that God wants to give us. So I just want to ask you, here today, take an account:

What is Fear Stealing From You?

What is fear stealing from you? Maybe it's your identity. I'm not talking about little things that fear is stealing from you. I'm talking about who you are as a person. There is a fear that has crawled up within you and has created this storm within you and now you are accepting labels that are not true of who you are. There is a fear that has begun to call you by names that God would never call you.

There is an identity that you are taking on that is wrapped in lies and they are not from God. There are lies and fears that are taking over your purpose. There are things that God has convicted you of and called you up to, uniquely, and you know that, but in the back of your mind you are afraid. You are saying, "Those are too big, I could never..." "Where I'm from..." "My family..." "I struggle with this. God could never use me."

What is fear stealing from you? I'm here to tell you today:
God Wants it Back.

God wants it back. Your identity, what fear has crept in and has begun to steal from you, God wants it back. Receive and accept nothing else other than that you are made in the image of God, you are a son, a daughter of God. Let everything else fall and believe that that is who you are. Come on.

Your purpose in life, your calling, the things that God has uniquely put on you, not the thing that your friend told you about, not that dream you saw on TV, the thing that God has placed on your heart—there are fears right now that are telling you that you can't do that. That is not from God. God has not given you a spirit of fear but of power and of love, a Spirit that can overcome any of that.

In these storms of life we are not focusing on our fears, our shortcomings, the things that we are afraid to mention, we are mentioning what God has called us to do. And we know that if He's called us to them, if it was His idea to get in the boat, we're going to make it all of the way across. The storms can come, the rain can crash down, but we're going to be all right. This boat is going to take on water, but it's not going down!

Your salvation, from that moment, to now and the breath you are breathing, and for all of eternity, God wants you back. Is there a lie that you believe that has kept you from the church, believing that God is not for all people? God is for you. God wants you. God will meet you in those fears and rip them apart one by one, day by day, until the time comes for eternity, and you face Him face to face.

I just want to encourage you right now, if you're afraid, afraid of the change, afraid of being able to give up the life that you've had, afraid to trust that God could love you that much, He does.

He's already proven it. He stopped the storms. He left heaven. He came to earth. Our God lived a perfect life and was murdered on our behalf. He took on our sin, all of the things that we do have a reason to be afraid for. And He cancelled the debt. God was buried. He allowed Himself to be buried but rose three days later bringing peace to the things that we fear more than anything, sin and death itself.

If God can bring peace to death He can bring peace to your life right now. This is Good News that you can accept today. God is for you, and He wants a relationship with you.

And I also want to say for all of us, maybe you came to faith out of fear. You came into faith out of a fear of going to hell. You came to faith believing that you just wanted some way to be able to handle the thoughts and the fears of what's going to happen when you close your eyes for good and you die. So you found Jesus and it made a ton of sense to you. And He took away that fear. And I'm glad He did.

But I'm telling you, faith is for more than that one day when you die. Faith is for the storms of life right now. Faith is for the storms you are going to face when you leave these doors. Do not bring your faith to such a low point. Remember this same Spirit that raised Jesus from the grave lives in you.

And when you go you may experience fear, but you do not have to live in fear. You live by faith. It is by faith that you have been saved. It is by faith that you live.

What I want to do right now is just pray for us. And I want to pray for a peace, a peace that surpasses all understanding, a peace that will bring a moment of calm that you can see this world for what it is. These fears and these lies for what they are and that you could hear God's voice for what it is. And let it bellow louder over everything else. Let that be what you walk out of here with, alright?

Pray with me if you would:

God, we thank You so much for today. God, we thank You for this story that beautifully shows that You are God. You are Immanuel. God with us. So, God, I pray for all of the fears, (since we've been talking about them, they've been coming to the surface) fear in places where we are out of control, we don't have the control, we can't do anything immediately.

But, God, with those same thoughts and with those same outstretched hands believing we are out of control, we don't know what to do, those same hands can become praying hands, those same hands can be opened up to receive the peace that You have for us, a peace that surpasses all understanding, a peace that brings peace in the midst of the storms, a peace that will guard our hearts and minds in Christ Jesus.

And, God, I pray right now that this would be a day and a week and season when we cast out fears, when we receive the Spirit that You give us, which is not a spirit of fear but one of love and of faith and of power and discipline.

And, God, I pray right now for all of us. Let us believe that this is true. That you are with us in this boat. We may take on water but, God, You are going to be with us, and we will get to the other side. Let faith guide us from this day forward. Jesus, we love You. It's in Your perfect name we pray: Amen.