

Learn From Jesus

Faith in the Storm

Have you ever been terrified? Have you ever felt your life was truly in imminent danger?

One man who understood fear was Haman. You'll find his story in the book of Esther. Haman hated Esther's uncle Mordecai and planned to kill him and all the Jews. But he didn't realise that Queen Esther was Jewish. When Queen Esther revealed the plot to King Ahasuerus, Esther 7:6 says, "...So Haman was terrified before the king and queen."

Everyone experiences fear at some point.

In this message in the series *Learn From Jesus*, we're looking at the topic of Faith in the Storm.

Mark 4:35-41

On the same day, when evening had come, He said to them, "Let us cross over to the other side." Now when they had left the multitude, they took Him along in the boat as He was. And other little boats were also with Him. And a great windstorm arose, and the waves beat into the boat, so that it was already filling. But He was in the stern, asleep on a pillow. And they awoke Him and said to Him, "Teacher, do You not care that we are perishing?" Then He arose and rebuked the wind, and said to the sea, "Peace, be still!" And the wind ceased and there was a great calm. But He said to them, "Why are you so fearful? How is it that you have no faith?" And they feared exceedingly, and said to one another, "Who can this be, that even the wind and the sea obey Him!"

Here are some powerful truths that we learn from this passage of Scripture.

1. Fear changes your perspective

Imagine the disciples in that boat. It wasn't just breezy. There was "a great windstorm."

And the boat was filling with water because of the waves.

Would that be a tad nerve-racking for you?

The disciples looked at the waves, heard the wind, saw the boat filling up and they were filled with fear.

And they lost their faith.

Jesus said, "Why are you so fearful? How is it that you have no faith?"

Fear takes our focus from where it should be and concentrates it on the circumstances.

And the more we look at our circumstances, what do you think happens?

The more fearful we become & our perspective changes.

E.g. Moses sent spies into Canaan (the Promised Land) to spy out the land.

This is the report that stopped them from entering Promised Land:

Numbers 13:32-33

And they gave the children of Israel a bad report of the land which they had spied out, saying, "The land through which we have gone as spies is a land that devours its inhabitants, and all the people whom we saw in it are men of great stature. There we saw the giants (the descendants of Anak came from the giants); and we were like grasshoppers in our own sight, and so we were in their sight."

Their own fear caused them to see themselves as weak and insignificant.

The disciples were so fearful, they were at the point where they even doubted Jesus' love for them.

They said, "Lord, don't You care that we're perishing?"

What sort of thing was that to say to the Lord?

No one would ever care more for them than He would.

But fear changes the way you see things.

And fear doesn't have to be extreme, like being 1,500m up a cliff, or coming to the realisation that the king is about to execute you, for it to have a drastic effect on your perspective.

There are all kinds of fears: fear of the unknown, fear of the future, fear of stepping out into something new, fear of rejection, fear making a mistake, fear of failure...

Every one of these can have a powerful impact on the direction our lives take.

2. Fear is the opposite of faith

"Why are you so fearful? How is it that you have no faith?"

Fear and faith are diametrically opposed.

So we have to choose one.

When King Saul looked out and saw the Philistines lined up for battle and heard Goliath, their champion, challenge Israel, his fear kept him rooted to the spot.

He was robbed of a great victory by his own fear.

Whereas David, who was much younger, much less experienced in the art of war, and far less equipped, experienced God's victory because he refused to fear.

2 Timothy 1:7

For God has not given us a spirit of fear, but of power and of love and of a sound mind.

That kind of fear isn't from God.

But there is one kind of fear that is absolutely essential.

Mark 4:39-41

Then He arose and rebuked the wind, and said to the sea, "Peace, be still!" And the wind ceased and there was a great calm. But He said to them, "Why are you so fearful? How is it that you have no faith?" And they feared exceedingly, and said to one another, "Who can this be, that even the wind and the sea obey Him!"

Before, they were afraid; now they are exceedingly afraid.

Because they came to a sudden realisation that the guy snoozing in the back of the boat was much more than just an ordinary man.

Their fear response to that was totally rational.

It makes sense, doesn't it, that if you're afraid of a storm because of its great power, then you really should be afraid of a person who has even more power than the storm.

When I was young Christian, I was sharing gospel with much older people and said something about fearing God. They said, "Why should we fear God?"

I'll let Jesus answer that question:

Luke 12:4-5

And I say to you, My friends, do not be afraid of those who kill the body, and after that have no more that they can do. But I will show you whom you should fear: Fear Him who, after He has killed, has power to cast into hell; yes, I say to you, fear Him!

That makes sense too, doesn't it?

I really don't care what they do with my body when I'm dead. As far as I'm concerned, they can stick me in a cardboard box and drop me down a mine shaft.

They can't do anything to hurt me once I'm dead.

But God, on the other hand, has power in this life and the next.

And there are real benefits to fearing God.

Proverbs 1:7

The fear of the LORD is the beginning of knowledge...

Proverbs 9:10

The fear of the LORD is the beginning of wisdom...

Ever wonder why some of the smartest people make the dumbest decisions?

Often it's because they don't fear God.

Proverbs 10:27

The fear of the LORD prolongs days...

Proverbs 14:26

In the fear of the LORD there is strong confidence...

Proverbs 14:27

The fear of the LORD is a fountain of life, to turn one away from the snares of death.

Proverbs 22:4

By humility and the fear of the LORD are riches and honour and life.

3. The solution is always Jesus

Who did they go to in the middle of the storm?

They went to Jesus.

The solution is always Jesus.

Do you need healing? Jesus is the Healer.

Do you need deliverance from fear, depression, addiction, anger, lust, resentment? Jesus is the Deliverer.

Do you need to be reconciled to the Father? Jesus said, "I am the way..."

Do you need peace, joy, love, grace, forgiveness, help, confidence, strength?

Do you need a brand new start? Jesus is the One who can do it.

The solution is always Jesus.

4. Faith does not mean inaction

When David saw Goliath, he didn't just pray and say, "Ok God, do Your thing. Go git him!"

He had to get out and face the enemy and trust that the Lord was with him.

Joshua 3:13-16

(Joshua speaking) "And it shall come to pass, as soon as the soles of the feet of the priests who bear the ark of the LORD, the Lord of all the earth, shall rest in the waters of the Jordan, that the waters of the Jordan shall be cut off, the waters that come down from upstream, and they shall stand as a heap." So it was, when the people set out from their camp to cross over the Jordan, with the priests bearing the ark of the covenant before the people, and as those who bore the ark came to the Jordan, and the feet of the priests who bore the ark dipped in the edge of the water (for the Jordan overflows all its banks during the whole time of harvest), that the waters which came down from upstream stood still, and rose in a heap very far away at Adam, the city that is beside Zaretan. So the waters that went down into the Sea of the Arabah, the Salt Sea, failed, and were cut off; and the people crossed over opposite Jericho.

Two things stand out to me in this passage: 1) I wonder what it was like in the city of Adam?

Imagine two guys standing next to the river chatting and suddenly the river stands up in a heap: "Whoa! Look at that."

Imagine explaining to his wife when he got home. She'd probably say, "Darling you really need to stop taking a wineskin with you to work."

The second thing that stands out to me is that the Israelites have waited forty years for this moment. They are poised and ready to enter the Promised Land. Joshua says, "When feet of priests rest in the water, the waters shall stand in a heap."

And the priests put their feet in the water, and what happens? Nothing ... and something.

Because what happened, happened over 25 kms away up river.

That's where the water stood in a heap.

Can you imagine that moment when Joshua makes his bold declaration, the priests step into the water, and then they wait.

And Joshua's probably thinking, "Lord, now would be a good time."

And everyone's looking at him, and then finally, the last of the water from upstream flows past and everyone breathes out.

Wow! Talk about faith.

What's this got to do with what happened in the NT, in the boat, in the storm?

Simple, nothing happened till the priests put their feet in the water.

Faith isn't praying and standing back to wait for God to do something.

God expects us to do something too.

In a family we knew, the husband gave up work to live by faith.

Folks, that's not faith; it's laziness masquerading as faith.

God expects us to do something.

We see this expectation in Jesus' response.

The disciples woke Him up and said, "Boo-hoo, we're gonna die!"

Jesus then fixed the problem and then He rebuked them.

"Where is your faith?" He asked.

In other words, "Why didn't you fix the problem? Why did you have to wake Me when you could have taken care of it yourselves?"

Let's finish with two other statements that Jesus made:

Mark 11:23-24

For assuredly, I say to you, whoever says to this mountain, 'Be removed and be cast into the sea,' and does not doubt in his heart, but believes that those things he says will be done, he will have whatever he says. Therefore I say to you, whatever things you ask when you pray, believe that you receive *them*, and you will have *them*.