

Somebody once said,

*“When it comes to faith, what you **do**, demonstrates what you **really** believe.”*

Today we’re going to be talking about “faith” and “fear”.

And **what** we fear, and in what **way** we fear it, is tied (very much) to what we believe about who Jesus is, and what our relationship is with Him...

You and I – we live in a period of history, and in a locality, where human life, is the safest it’s ever been – anywhere – any time in history... And yet our generation, are highly fearful...

Some people are crippled with:

- phobias;
- fears;
- anxiety...

There are many in our community (and maybe even here today), who are afraid – who are anxious;... Sometimes we’re afraid for a reason, and sometimes we’re afraid for no reason at all...

Sometimes it’s right to be afraid...

The other morning, I was out on a bike-ride, and there was a fair old head-wind, and so I had my head down, and I was pushing hard... And, with my head down, and pumping away at the pedals, I wasn’t really looking very far ahead of me..... And suddenly, into my sight, came a great big, brown snake. It’s head was so dark, it looked a bit like an inland Taipan

(but we're not supposed to have those here),,, There he was – laying on the road, sunning himself in the early morning sun... Instantly, I swerved, and at the same time, I got a shot of adrenaline, that made me feel “not so tired” any more – the instinct of flight kicked in...

It gave me a fright... All of a sudden, I've got the potential of being tangled up with a snake on a push-bike... We have built into us, a mechanism of fear, for good reason....

But sometimes we're afraid for no reason at all...

I've never been a great horseman – I wasn't brought up with horses – we did all our stock-work on motorbikes... But when I was 18, I had to start riding a horse, because my sister bought herself one, and it had a bit too much 'sting' in it for her, and so I'd ride it for her occasionally, and I'd take it mustering...

But I was always amazed at the equine reaction to the unexpected:

– A bird would fly out of the grass beside it, and the horse would instantly take 3, side-ways steps, and then go “What was that?” - It would react in fear, and then it would have a look to see what it had just run away from...

But with us, something unexpected happens, that startles us, and our minds quickly process “What is that?” And Oh, Quick. Run away!!!

Sometimes we have a reason to be afraid, and sometimes we're afraid for no reason...

Now, if I was to attempt to address the topic of “unreasonable fears”, or “the condition of clinical anxiety” from a psychological standpoint – honestly, I wouldn’t know what I was talking about – I’ve been trained in Agriculture – I’m not a psychologist...

And I reckon, if I tried to convince someone that they’ve got nothing to be afraid of, they would most likely take the view – unless you’ve lived in my shoes, you have **no idea** how I feel...

And I accept that...

And so, today, I’m not going to try and convince anyone, to not be afraid, and I’m not going to simply tell you, not to be anxious for no reason... I’m not a psychologist. I’m a preacher of the Gospel, and my job, is to make Jesus known...

And through these 7 verses today, Mark reveals to us, the power of the real Jesus... And when we truly know, who the **real** Jesus is, let’s just see what our fears and anxieties do...

Righto:

When I used to run a youth group, we used to sometimes take the Saunders/Armstrong barge out on the river with the youth group at night, and we’d have a bbq on the river, and do a bit of swimming in the dark, and we’d turn all the lights off, and I’d do a devotion...

And we'd get home, and Jake would say, "Dad, you did that same devotion last year; And the year before; And the year before..." ...

The first couple of times, I honestly forgot that I'd done it the year before, but it just seemed to fit – being out on the water in the dark, in the still of the night...

Now, at this point, in the Gospel of Mark, we have a bit of a change in Jesus' mission. And to us, this mightn't seem like 'a big deal' – Jesus says to His disciples "Let's go across to the other side of the lake." But do you know what's on the other side of the lake? The enemy's on the other side of the lake...

Up until this point, Jesus' ministry, has been to the Jews... He's been south, to Bible belt (that's where He was baptised), but most of His ministry has been up in the North, in the rural and fishing areas of Galilee. But when he crosses the lake, he's into Gentile territory... And so, this is a different mission for Jesus – to take the Gospel to the Gentiles...

And so he left the crowds on the shoreline, and they started heading across in the boat, and Mark tells us, there were other boats with Him.

^{v37} And a great windstorm arose, and the waves were breaking into the boat, so that the boat was already filling. ³⁸ But he was in the stern, asleep on the cushion.

Can you imagine this? Jesus' disciples – some of them were seasoned, professional fishermen, believed their lives were in peril... , and there was Jesus, asleep in the back of the boat...

And they woke him and said to him, "Teacher, do you not care that we are perishing?" (We're about to die)

And so Jesus woke up:

And he **roused** on the wind and the sea:

You wind there – stop that ruckus – Shut up...

You waves – stop that silly nonsense!!!!

And instantly, there was a great calm...

Wow!!! Imagine that...

Now, if you know your Old Testament, you might be reminded of the story of Jonah... But when we compare the story of Jonah, with what happened on the Lake, we've actually got a story of opposites.

- **Like** Jesus, God was sending Jonah, on a mission to the enemy.
- **Unlike** Jesus, Jonah was disobedient.
- So, Jesus got on a boat, to go **to** the enemy, in obedience to God...
- Jonah got on a boat, to **run away** from his mission. In fact, he went the opposite direction...

- Jesus and Jonah were both asleep in the boat.
- Only, Jonah, was asleep in the inner bowels of the ship,
- But Jesus was asleep in the stern of a small, open fishing boat.

- With the story of Jonah, the cause of the storm, was his disobedience to God, and as soon as he gets thrown overboard, the storm stops.
- God sends a big fish to swallow Jonah, and take him to Nineveh...
- And so, God controls nature, and the disobedient prophet Jonah, is subject to God's control of nature...

- But with the **lake** incident, Jesus is being obedient to God – it's not because of disobedience that the storm comes... In fact, the storm could be a barrier to Jesus' mission...

- And it is **Jesus Himself**, who rouses at the storm, and it instantly calms...
- **Jesus** has the power to control nature...

And the disciples were amazed:

they were filled with great fear and said to one another, "Who then is this, that even the wind and the sea obey him?"

- With the story of Jonah, the sailors who didn't know God, when they saw the sea stop its raging, **feared THE LORD (YHWH) exceedingly**, and they offered a sacrifice to YHWH and made vows...

- With the **Lake** incident, the disciples feared Jesus...

You see, what did the Lake incident demonstrate about who Jesus is??? Who's the only one who can control nature? Who's the only one, who can control the wind?... God, and God alone...

You know, in our current political climate, it seems, almost daily, we're being forced to decide whether we are believers in climate change, or whether we're a "climate-change denier"... Oh, what a crime that is – is there anything worse???

But the real issue, is not about climate change, but about who has the ability to control the weather in the first place. The climate is always changing. It changes from year to year. It changes in cycles of decades and centuries and millennia...

The issue that we're being asked to believe, is that if humans take action now, **we** can be the changers of the climate... Every time there's a cyclone, or a weather record is broken, the claim is always made, "We need to take action now, or else we're going to see more of this happening."

Now, from a Godly perspective, surely this has to be the height of human arrogance...

Yes, it is certainly important that we be good stewards of the resources that God has given us, and our generation is probably burning more fossil-fuels than what is our share... But to believe that we have the power to change the weather... To believe that we have the power to control the Sea-Level... Really????

In the book of Job, God very clearly lets us know who's domain this is:

Job 38:

Talking about sea-level, God says:

8 "Or who shut in the sea with doors
when it burst out from the womb,
9 when I made clouds its garment
and thick darkness its swaddling band,
10 and prescribed limits for it
and set bars and doors,
11 and said, 'Thus far shall you come, and no
farther,
and here shall your proud waves be stayed'?

Who do you think, is in control of the Sea-Level? God is...

What about weather events: V22

22 "Have you entered the storehouses of the
snow,
or have you seen the storehouses of the hail,
23 which I have reserved for the time of trouble,
for the day of battle and war?
24 What is the way to the place where the light
is distributed,
or where the east wind is scattered upon the
earth?
25 "Who has cleft a channel for the torrents of
rain

and a way for the thunderbolt,
26 to bring rain on a land where no man is,
on the desert in which there is no man,
27 to satisfy the waste and desolate land,
and to make the ground sprout with grass?
28 "Has the rain a father,
or who has begotten the drops of dew?
29 From whose womb did the ice come forth,
and who has given birth to the frost of heaven?
30 The waters become hard like stone,
and the face of the deep is frozen.

Who do you think controls the weather??? God does... It's the height of human arrogance, is to claim that humans control it...

But there **was** one human who had control over the weather... If only God can control the weather, and Jesus could control the weather, then who is Jesus? He's God.

Out on that lake, the disciples displayed 2 types of fear.

In the Greek, the first fear was δειλοί
Jesus said: "Why are you so afraid? Have you still no faith?"

And **that** sort of fear – δειλός (deilos) fear, is cowardly fear, timid, fearful...

But after Jesus had calmed the waves (with just a few words), they had a **great φόβος (phobos) fear**... Which means terror, alarm, fright, but also means reverence, respect, awe...

Now, as seasoned fisherman, they knew their lives were in peril... And normally, it would be quite appropriate for them to have that fear that they were about to die...

But because Jesus was with them, that was the wrong sort of fear for them to have... You see, they were afraid that they were about to die, because they still didn't have faith...

They'd come to the end of the skills that they had, to save themselves from the sea... And they didn't really know who Jesus **really** was... They didn't **know** they had the Son of God on board. They didn't **know** they had the one who controls the wind and the waves, right there in the boat with them...

But when Jesus did his thing, all of a sudden, their eyes were opened, and they no longer had the cowardly fear – they no longer had the timid fear – they had the terror, of reverence, respect, and awe, that only comes from encountering the One True Living God.

Who is this, that even the wind and the sea obey Him?

I reckon they knew very well, who it was... , because it's only the Lord God almighty, who the wind and the sea obey...

*“When it comes to faith, what we **do**, demonstrates what we **really** believe.”*

In Romans 8, Paul says:

“If God is for us, who can be against us?”

He says:

³⁵ Who shall separate us from the love of Christ? Shall tribulation, or distress, or persecution, or famine, or nakedness, or danger, or sword? ³⁶ As it is written,

**“For your sake we are being killed all the day long;
we are regarded as sheep to be slaughtered.”**

³⁷ No, in all these things we are more than conquerors through him who loved us. ³⁸ For I am sure that neither death nor life, nor angels nor rulers, nor things present nor things to come, nor powers, ³⁹ nor height nor depth, nor anything else in all creation, will be able to separate us from the love of God in Christ Jesus our Lord.

Now, on what does Paul base such a conclusion?

He bases it on the fact that, for disciples of Jesus, God not only loves us, but God is with us, and He holds us in the palm of His hand...

Just as surely as Jesus was with those disciples in that boat on the lake, Jesus is with His disciples today...

Now, does that mean that we will not fall victim to: injury, sickness or death?

Does that mean that we won't be subject to:

- accident; or
- random incident; or
- directed attack?

No, that's not at all what it means... In fact, Christians are often targeted for being Christians...

But when we **really** know who Jesus is, that doesn't matter...

A worldly perspective, is the source of fear and anxiety.

And it puts personal safety, as our greatest concern... We see it as our right, to do everything we can, to extend our lives for as long as we can, because the worldly perspective, only sees this earthly, worldly life...

But when we really know who Jesus is, does that really matter so much?

When we give our lives to Jesus, we **belong** to Jesus – And if we know that God is with us in life – and if we know that are with God in death, what is there to fear???

We only fear, when we're living for this world – not when we're living for eternity?

I don't know if it's **the** most common command in the Bible, or if it's just **one** of the most common:

- Do not fear
- Do not be afraid
- Fear not

We hear that command over, and over, and over again.

For people of faith in the Lord Jesus Christ, there is no reason to fear.

There is no reason for anxiety – we cast all our anxiety on Him...

Of course we all know there are circumstances beyond our control, but how we respond, demonstrates what we believe about Jesus... **And** our response is a product of our relationship with Jesus...

Let me be really clear, If I **haven't** given my life to Jesus, and I'm **not** a disciple of Jesus, well, I've got very good reason to fear... But for those who are walking with the Lord.... – He's got this...

Questions?