

Welcome to our fourth message of five on the important subject of fear. The fear that we will address today is always listed in the top ten. People are literally scared to death. Today you might have arrived hoping for some message that makes you feel good and did not want to come to a service that was more like a funeral. Many people avoid funerals, did you know that?! It's a subtle way to try to avoid thinking about death. Obviously I have a conviction about speaking on it today, because of anything in life it is the most certain outcome on earth for every human being.

When we are talking about such a challenging subject like the mortality of human life, it raises several questions. People usually have lots of questions when they are struggling with the death of a loved one or facing their own death. The disciples were no exception. They has several questions like: Where are you going? Why can't I follow you now? How can we know the way? All of these questions began to surface in the hearts of the disciples when Jesus said, “My children, I will be with you only a little longer . . . where I am going, you cannot come.” (John 13:33) Peter said these words in verse 37, “I will lay down my life for you.” The subject that was affecting all of their lives is our focus today . . . death. Let's turn to **John 14:1-6** for our study today.

What? — “Trust in God.” (verse 1) The word that describes the feeling in the room is troubled. It can be defined as “a deep disturbance” because of mounting fear and perplexed emotions. The first answer Jesus gives is the principle that addresses the whole subject: faith melts away fear. The imperative is used to encourage them to persist in faith. This principle is the subject of Jesus' death and the fear that they might die. But it also pertains to every other subject in this whole series about fear.

Where? — “In my Father's house.” (verse 2) The question is, “Where are you going?” Or, “Where is he/she right now?” Jesus specifically answers their question. It is not some light at the end of the tunnel, or celestial floating in the clouds, or a fishing trip on the heavenly seas of eternity. It is a real place that is described with many rooms, which means “dwelling places.”

- ✓ “And I will dwell in the house of the Lord forever.” (Psalm 23:6)
- ✓ “I tell you, use worldly wealth to gain friends for yourselves, so that when it is gone, you will be welcomed into eternal dwellings.” (Luke 16:9)
- ✓ “I saw the Holy City, the new Jerusalem, coming down out of heaven from God . . .” (Revelation 21:2)

Why? — “And if I go and prepare a place for you, I will come back . . .” (verse 3) There are many “why” questions when facing death. Jesus gives two answers to encourage us. There are two words that describe his answer: Preparation and anticipation.

- ✓ “No eye has seen, no ear has heard, no mind has conceived what God has prepared for those who love him.” (1 Corinthians 2:9)
- ✓ “(Heaven) . . . prepared as a bride beautifully dressed for her husband.” (Revelation 21:2)
- ✓ **Hebrews 11:13-16** summarizes the longing for a better country . . . a heavenly one.

How? — “You know the way to the place where I am going.” (verse 4) Jesus said, “I am.” He purposely uses the language of deity. The first thing that he says about himself is that he is the way. Jesus didn't just point to the way; he was/is the way. The Gospel of John uses the “I am” declarations several times: light of the world; the gate; the Good Shepherd; the resurrection and the life; the (true) vine. Exodus 3:14 — “I Am who I Am.” Jesus clearly reveals himself. His invitation is announced in the very beginning of John's Gospel in John 1:12 — “Yet to all who received him, to those who believed in his name, he gave the right to become children of God.”

I would summarize what Jesus said in our teaching today with these words — You can trust Jesus because now he has gone to heaven and is preparing a place for you to be with him forever, as well as for all those who put their faith in him.

Reflective Questions:

1. Why is death so scary? What fears do you have about death, and what confidence do you also possess knowing that one day you will die?
2. What are some of the common questions people ask when a loved one dies? What are questions that people ask when they are facing death themselves? What questions do you ask?
3. Why is “trust” the main principle for this teaching, and also our series on fear? What does trust do for you right now?
4. How do you envision heaven? Why does thinking about heaven help you to have less fear about dying? What encourages you about the fact that Jesus is preparing a place for you right now?
5. Are you absolutely sure that Jesus is the way for you to eternity? Have you put your trust in him for his ability and authority to save you? How might you live for him out of gratitude for this marvelous grace that he has bestowed on you, that you will one day be with him in heaven?

Reading Schedule for May 24th – 30th, 2010

We will briefly highlight three different prophets. For three days we will read about Jeremiah and his experience. He is known as the weeping prophet. Basically, the people did not listen to Jeremiah and so he was lonely and even rejected, yet continued to serve the Lord. We won't learn much about Ezekiel, but we will read a fascinating story about dry bones coming to life. By the end of the week, we will meet a man named Daniel, who is a great example to us of honoring God above man. I think you will be inspired and challenged by our readings for this week.

May 24: **Jeremiah 1:1-9** – “Before I formed you in the womb I knew you, before you were born I set you apart; I appointed you as a prophet to the nations.” (verse 5) The Word of the Lord came to Jeremiah, but he had a hard time believing it. He thought of himself as insignificant, someone who was not able to speak well. Like Jeremiah, God knew you long before you were born. He thought about you and has always had plans for you. God has some specific things for you to do. Ephesians 2:10 says that God has prepared opportunities for us in advance to do. What assignment(s) do you sense God has given you? How are you trying to live that out?

May 25: **Jeremiah 36:1-32** – “So Jeremiah took another scroll and gave it to the scribe Baruch son of Neriah, and as Jeremiah dictated, Baruch wrote on it all the words of the scroll that Jehoiakim king of Judah had burned in the fire. And many similar words were added to them.” (verse 32) God had told Jeremiah to write words on a scroll. The scribe Baruch read all that was written on the scroll to the people gathered. When the king heard the words, he ordered that the scroll be burned. In other words, he rejected God's Word through Jeremiah. Today many people try to put God's Word aside. But we can know from the promise of the Bible that God's Word stands forever. Isaiah 40:8 reads, “The grass withers and the flowers fall, but the word of our God stands forever.” How important is God's Word? Why is it so important to obey it?

May 26: **Jeremiah 38:1-13** – “So they took Jeremiah and put him into the cistern of Malkijah, the king's son, which was in the courtyard of the guard. They lowered Jeremiah by ropes into the cistern; it had no water in it, only mud, and Jeremiah sank down into the mud.” (verse 6) Judah's leaders persecuted Jeremiah repeatedly for faithfully proclaiming God's messages. For forty years of faithful ministry he received no acclaim, no love, no popular following. In fact, he was beaten, jailed, threatened, and even forced to leave his homeland. Jeremiah is an example of being faithful even when he wasn't a success. What does Jeremiah's life teach you from the three chapters we read this week?

May 27: **Ezekiel 37:1-14** – I have preached on this account several times. It is a fascinating story about spiritual renewal brought about by the breath of God. “Then he said to me: ‘Son of man, these bones are the whole house of Israel. They say, “Our bones are dried up and our hope is gone; we are cut off.”’” (verse 11) This is an illustration of spiritually bankrupt people who were hopeless. Their situation was overwhelming and they had nowhere to turn. God would bring new life by his Holy Spirit to these dry bones. God can restore anyone. He can restore any church, any person, any situation . . . nothing with him is impossible. Rather than give up, why not pray to God that he would restore you and those that you love? Why not pray that he would put his Spirit in you in a new and fresh way? Is that something you need? Are there others in your life that need a fresh touch from God? What does this story teach you?

May 28: **Daniel 1:1-21** – “At the end of the ten days they looked healthier and better nourished than any of the young men who ate the royal food. So the guard took away their choice food and the wine they were to drink and gave them vegetables instead.” (vv. 15 & 16) This is one example of how God watched over Daniel and his friends. He had a special purpose for these men and he would strengthen them no matter what. How did God take care of Daniel and his comrades during their time in Babylon? What effort did they have to exhibit as well? What do you learn from this chapter for your life?

May 29: **Daniel 2:1-24** – “He reveals deep and hidden things; he knows what lies in darkness, and light dwells with him. I thank and praise you, O God of my fathers: You have given me wisdom and power, you have made known to me what we asked of you, you have made known to us the dream of the king.” (vv. 22 & 23) This could be a theme verse describing how God helped Daniel. Daniel was sensitive to the guidance of the Holy Spirit and spoke the truth of God boldly. Why was Daniel someone God could use? How did Daniel respond to the crisis he faced? Why can we trust God in the most challenging of circumstances?

May 30: **Daniel 2:25-49** – “In the time of those kings, the God of heaven will set up a kingdom that will never be destroyed, nor will it be left to another people. It will crush all those kingdoms and bring them to an end, but it will itself endure forever.” (verse 44) God's kingdom will never be destroyed. If you are upset by threats of war, or the prosperity of evil leaders, remember that God decides the outcome of history. Under God's protection, God's kingdom is indestructible. Those who believe in God are members of his kingdom and are secure in him forever. How did Daniel live that truth? Why is believing in God's reliability so important? What part of this story stands out to you? Why?

Prayers: Pray for our Sunday ministry as we gather around the Lord's Table and hear the message from one of our elders, Craig Kuhn. Pray for God's purposes to be accomplished at New Harvest this summer. Lift up our Children's Ministry and Youth Ministry in prayer, because young people are crucial to the body life of our church.