

St Nicholas Church, Sighthill

Sunday, 13 March 2022

'There's a Dragon in My Closet' Fear of Worst-Case Scenario



Call to worship:

"Even though I walk through the valley of the shadow of death, I will fear no evil, for you are with me; your rod and your staff, they comfort me" (Psalm 23:4). "Let us never forget to pray. God lives. He is near. He is real. He is not only aware of us but cares for us. He is our Father. He is accessible to all who will seek Him." Gordon B. Hinckley

Song: Be still for the presence of the Lord

<https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=ZugvUQ4m90U>

Opening Prayer

We gather together in the presence of a God whose love is freedom, whose touch is healing, whose voice is calm.

We meet not in our own strength but in the knowledge that God's Spirit abides within us, in our liturgy today and in our daily lives when we depart from this place. The blessing receive is shared, in the hope that others might be drawn to the God, by our love and service of one another

We ask all this in the name of our triune God; Creator, Saviour, and Breath of Life, Amen.

Community Confession

God of compassion and mercy, You sent us your Son as the saviour of the world, and told us to love one another as much as you loved us. Yet, we struggle to love each other. We have a hard time loving those who are not like us, who disagree with us, or who ask us to face the truths about ourselves.

You told us to love one another, because love is from God. And we often do not love those we think are dirty, hungry, lost, or undeserving. It is written that perfect love casts out fear, and yet we are afraid. Afraid for our safety, our wallets, and how others perceive us.

Forgive us, God, and show us how to love. Release us from our judgment and our fear. Open our hearts so that we might receive your perfect love, and offer it to one another. In Jesus' name, Amen.

The Lord's Prayer...

Bible Reading: Mark 14: 32-38 (NIV)

They went to a place called Gethsemane, and Jesus said to his disciples, 'Sit here while I pray. He took Peter, James and John along with him, and he began to be deeply distressed and troubled. 'My soul is overwhelmed with sorrow to the point of death,' he said to them. 'Stay here and keep watch. 'Going a little farther, he fell to the ground and prayed that if possible the hour might pass from him. 'Abba Father,' he said, 'everything is possible for you. Take this cup from me. Yet not what I will, but

what you will.' Then he returned to his disciples and found them sleeping. 'Simon,' he said to Peter, 'are you asleep? Couldn't you keep watch for one hour? Watch and pray so that you will not fall into temptation. The spirit is willing, but the flesh is weak.'

Reflection

Our brains take a "better safe than sorry" approach to uncertainties, both big and small. It might be easier to think of it this way: Your brain is like a smoke detector. Imagine you're sitting in your living watching you're your favourite TV programme when the smoke alarm goes off down the hall. What's your first reaction?

Aargh! I forgot to take my toast out of the toaster.

Or the house is on fire!

We live in a time of fear; it seems as though threats to our health, well-being, security and life itself are coming with an ever-increasing intensity. We still have the global threat to health through Coronavirus and the threat of a war between Russia and Ukraine or, as others describe it proxy war (like the war in Syria) now fought in Ukraine between Russia and the rest of the Western World. The media carries a lot of blame for the way in which they play on the fear that people feel to sell newspapers or gain more TV viewers. As someone said:

"When fear seizes you, all your ability to think rationally evaporates. Life becomes overwhelming, and the promises of God are thrown out the window. When Moses sent the spies into Canaan to gather information for the people of Israel, fear of the looming giants became much more visible than any of the blessings Canaan had to offer. Although they obediently gathered fruit from the land, their report focused on all the seemingly impossible obstacles they faced."

"What's your worst fear? Jesus did more than speak about fear. He faced it. Jesus prayed in Gethsemane: "'Abba, Father,' everything is possible for you. Please take this cup of suffering away from me. Yet I want your will to be done, not mine.'" Mark 14:35-36. The cup equalled Jesus' worst-case scenario— to be the recipient of God's wrath and to experience isolation from his Father. And what Jesus did with his fear shows us what to do with ours. He prayed! He even requested the prayer support of friends. Jesus' prayer was brief. It was straightforward and trusting. Do likewise. Be specific about your fears. Call them out in prayer. As Christians we should remember that no matter what happens, God has promised to be with us during our moments of fear and panic, God is whispering promises to us.

Fighting Off Fear

When fear begins to creep in and all the “what-if” situations begin to consume your mind, here are seven things to remember:

1. **God’s truth.** Is what I’m thinking about really happening? Or is it just my imagination running wild? Paul reminds us to dwell on what is true, honourable, just, pure, lovely, commendable, excellent, praiseworthy (Philippians 4:8).
2. **God’s presence.** We can be comforted remembering that we are not alone. God is with us. “God is our refuge and strength, a very present help in trouble” (Psalm 46:1).
3. **God’s grace.** God promises to provide us with his all-sufficient grace for every trial that comes our way. “My grace is sufficient for you, for my power is made perfect in weakness,” Jesus told Paul. And therefore, with Paul, we can “boast all the more gladly of [our] weaknesses, so that the power of Christ may rest upon [us]” (2 Corinthians 12:9).
4. **God’s sovereignty.** God is in control over every situation in our lives. “All the inhabitants of the earth are accounted as nothing, and he does according to his will among the host of heaven and among the inhabitants of the earth; and none can stay his hand or say to him, ‘What have you done?’” (Daniel 4:35).
5. **God’s listening ear.** Pour out your heart to God in prayer. “I waited patiently for the Lord; he inclined to me and heard my cry” (Psalm 40:1).
6. **God’s trustworthiness.** “When I am afraid, I put my trust in you. In God, whose word I praise, in God I trust; I shall not be afraid. What can flesh do to me?” (Psalm 56:3–4).
7. **God’s big picture plan.** No matter how awful this trial may seem, God promises to use everything together for good, for those who are called according to his purpose (Romans 8:28). We may not see the good in our situation at the time, but we can trust God has a hidden smile behind the dark cloud.

Prayer for ourselves and others

Loving God, You have called us to be a living community. A people bound together as the body of Christ, and a family united in love. Yet Lord, in our broken world so many are suffering, so many are hurting. **Hear our prayers Lord**

For those whose lives are ruled by hate and vengeance, rather than love and justice. For those whose homes are not places of love or safety, but places of fear and violence. For those who have no home to speak of and have become invisible on our streets. For those who are stigmatised because of status, ill-health, ethnicity, or religion. Lord, You asked us to love our neighbours, all of them, not just the ones we choose. Enable us and equip us to carry out Your command to Love. Enable us Lord by the power of your love in us to take the active steps we need to take to love our enemies so that we may be an example to all of your mercy and grace. **Hear our prayers Lord**

For all those in our congregations and communities who are ill at home or in hospital – bring Your healing hands, Your comfort and peace. For all who are anxiously awaiting treatment, results, or appointments due to the impact of COVID-19 and our overwhelmed health service. For anxious relatives and carers who are exhausted and there is no rest, and no end in sight while the much-

needed care packages are few and far between. Lord equip us, Your servants and disciples, to assist them in their time of need. Enable us to be beacons of light in another dark day. **Hear our prayers Lord.**

Lord, You tasked us to do good to those who hate, which can seem difficult and, in this world, so unfair. It’s hard to love those who belittle, who shun, who exclude and who emotionally abuse. When we feel we should get our own back, You ask us to turn the other cheek. Inspire us to be willing advocates for truth and reconciliation. Inspire us to love justice and to practically live out mercy. Hate does not lay a healthy soil that enables love to grow and flourish, but walking in faith and following Your example and teaching changes everything. You call us all to make a positive difference and to heal Your broken world of its hurt and its divisions by a countercultural response to hurt and hate. **For we can all make a positive difference in Jesus’ name and for His sake.** Amen.

Hymn: Before the throne of God above

<https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=LULK2nZ6sCc>

Before the throne of God above
I have a strong a perfect plea
A great High Priest whose name is Love
Who ever lives and pleads for me
My name is graven on His hands
My name is written on His heart
I know that while in heaven He stands
No tongue can bid me thence depart
When Satan tempts me to despair
And tells me of the guilt within
Upward I look and see Him there
Who made an end of all my sin
Because the sinless Saviour died
My sinful soul is counted free
For God the Just is satisfied
To look on Him and pardon me
Behold Him there the risen Lamb
My perfect spotless Righteousness
The great unchangeable I AM
The King of glory and of grace
One with Himself I cannot die
My soul is purchased by His blood
My life is hid with Christ on high
With Christ my Saviour and my God

CCLI Song # 990391, Charitie Lees Bancroft

Benediction

**We now go into the world,
inspired by the extravagant love of God.**

**May we generously, with open hands,
loving one another as if our lives depended on it.
May we be good stewards of the gifts we have
received, so that God may be glorified in all that we
say and do.**

**And may the abundant love of God surround us, may
the extravagant grace of Jesus Christ sustain us,
and may the constant presence of the Holy Spirit
inspire and encourage us in every good deed and
word. Amen.**