**LIVING FEARLESS**

***Faith Over Fear***

The storm was raging. The disciples were screaming. Jesus was sleeping. What a scene that must have been. That story is found in Mark 4:35-41.

35 On the same day, when evening had come, He said to them, “Let us cross over to the other side.” 36 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. 37 And a great windstorm arose, and the waves beat into the boat, so that it was already filling. 38 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?”
39 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. 40 But He said to them, “Why are you so fearful? How is it that you have no faith?” 41 And they feared exceedingly, and said to one another, “Who can this be, that even the wind and the sea obey Him!”

The fishermen Peter, Andrew, James and John were struggling with the sails and the rudder stick while Matthew, Judas and their other landlubber buddies were likely throwing up over the side of the boat that was pitching side to side. When the other eight saw and heard the fear in the eyes and screams in the voices of the four experienced sailors they knew they were in deep, deep trouble. The terror of drowning at sea gripped their hearts. They were giving up all hope of rescue when suddenly they remembered their one lifeline to call. Jesus!!! But where was He? In the back of the boat! In panic mode they grab anything nailed down and hold on for dear life as they stumble their way to the stern. What was it they found Him doing in this violent storm? Sleeping like a baby, head propped up on a pillow (likely a sandbag used for ballast).

“*Master, don’t you care we are dying*?” Note, they didn’t ask, “Master, can you stop the storm?” They didn’t ask, “Master, can you control the boat?” Instead, they call His love and character into question. “Don’t you care?” What a slap in the face.

That’s what fear does to us. Fear questions our confidence in God’s goodness. We wonder if love lives in heaven? If He is asleep in my own personal storms of life, if He shuts His eyes to my doubts and fears, then is He a personal God at all? Suddenly, gripped by fear, we turn into control freaks. Fear is actually a loss of control. We grab for anything at hand to gain control, including anger at loved ones, or questions about God’s attention span, or Christ’s heart. After all they had seen Jesus do for others, including healing Peter’s mother-in-law, they now fearfully lose their faith in Him.

When fear takes over our life we automatically grab for safety over what we can see, not for faith in what we cannot see (Heb. 11:1). I was reading in a book recently that the gospels of Matthew, Mark, Luke and John list 125 Christ-given commands. Of these there are 21 in which Jesus said, “*DO NOT BE AFRAID*” (or it’s equivalents like “*take heart*” or “*be of good cheer”* or “*take courage*”). This means Jesus takes our fears very seriously. The one statement He said more than any other was, “Don’t be afraid.” Look at some of them to see for yourself:

“*Don’t be afraid*, you are worth more than many sparrows” (Matt. 10:31).
“*Take courage* son, your sins are forgiven” (Matt. 9:2).
“*Don’t be afraid*. Just believe and your daughter will be well” (Lk. 8:50).
“And when the disciples saw Him walking on the sea, they were troubled, saying, “It is a
 ghost!” And they cried out for fear. But immediately Jesus spoke to them, saying, “*Be
 of good cheer*! It is I; *do not be afraid*” (Matt. 14:26-27).
“*Do not fear* little flock, for it is your father’s good pleasure to give you the kingdom”
 (Lk. 12:32).
“*Let not your heart be troubled*, you believe in God, believe also in Me” (Jn. 14:1)
“Peace I leave with you, My peace I give to you; not as the world gives do I give to you.
 *Let not your heart be troubled*, *neither let it be afraid*” (Jn. 14:27).
“And He said to them, “*Why are you troubled*? And *why do doubts arise in your hearts*?
 Behold My hands and My feet” (Lk. 24:36-39).
“Jesus came and touched them and said, “Arise, and *do not be afraid*” (Matt. 17:8).

In our story of the sea storm we hear again Jesus calming the winds and water and then turning to them to say, *“Why are you so fearful? How is it that you have no faith?”*

Do you see the obvious connection of fear to faith? Faith casts out fear, or, fear casts out faith. Your choice. You can have one or the other, but you can’t have both. There is simply no room in your soul for both tenants to live there. Faith says to Fear: “Something’s gotta give, there’s not enough room in here for the both of us!” Faith and Love can be co-tenants, but not Faith and Fear, for the apostle John later wrote, “*There is no fear in love, but perfect love casts out fear*” (I Jn. 4:18).

Fear will always knock on your door. Just don’t invite it for dinner, and please don’t offer it a bed for the night. Instead, bolster your faith and love. It will cast out fear.

So this story begs for us to ask the question, “What are we afraid of?” We know there’s no boogey man lurking under the bed or in the closet. But I’m thinking too many of us who long ago quit fearing those imaginary monsters of our childhood are now fearing sea storms in our adulthood. Storms like political outcomes, invisible viruses, company downsizings, social distancing, and 101 other fear-mongers who try to creep into our lives and destroy our faith.

Those twelve apostles allowed fear to cast out faith. But Jesus stilled that sea-storm with a quiet rebuke of the winds, then stilled their heart-storm with a gentle rebuke of their doubts. He has had to rebuke me with the same words many times in my life: “Rick, why are you afraid? Why is it you have no faith?” Like those apostles in that boat, I also have been driven to my knees to worship Him who commands the wind and sea, and who says also to my heart, “Peace, be still.”

And the fear ceased, and there was a great calm. – Rick