Fear Not

Let’s be honest - a global pandemic is scary. Even if we aren’t worried about getting sick, then it’s easy to be worried about money. We may wonder, “How can we earn an income when we can’t leave our homes?” Things feel uncertain. What will happen in the future?

However, the Bible makes it clear that we are not to fear. In fact, we see the command not to fear 365 times in the Bible! Verses like Isaiah 43:1: “Fear not because I have redeemed you; I have called you by name, you are mine.” And Isaiah 41:10: “So do not fear, for I am with you; do not be dismayed, for I am your God. I will strengthen you and help you; I will uphold you with my righteous right hand.” Philippians 4:6-7 tells us: “Do not be anxious about anything, but in every situation, by prayer and petition, with thanksgiving, present your requests to God.And the peace of God, which transcends all understanding, will guard your hearts and your minds in Christ Jesus.”

It’s great to remind ourselves of these verses at these difficult times. But we do also need to be careful. These verses do not promise that nothing bad can ever happen. Rather, we are not to fear because of who God is. He is the one who has redeemed us and called us by name. We are His and He is always with us.

While Isaiah 43:1 might tell us to fear not, the next verse says “When you pass through the waters, I will be with you; and through the rivers; they shall not overwhelm you; when you walk though the fire you shall not be burned and the flame will not consume you.” This doesn’t say nothing bad will happen. In fact, these verses make it clear we *will* walk through the fire and through the water. But, as we do go through difficulties, we know that God is with us.

Even Jesus suffered. And just before He was arrested and crucified, He told His disciples, “In this world, you will have trouble. But take heart! I have overcome the world” (John 16:33). After His death, Jesus’ disciples *did* have trouble. They suffered and all were martyred. Paul, one of the first evangelists who wrote much of the New Testament, describes all sorts of suffering he experienced (2 Corinthians 11:24-28). So we know that the Bible doesn’t promise that nothing will go wrong for those who serve God. But instead it gives us a much greater reason not to fear. Because God is with us. The Maker of the heavens and earth, the One who is all powerful, is with us. He never leaves us or forsakes us. We are not alone. He has not forgotten us, but He sees us and loves us.

He has also promised us that we will never face trials that are beyond our ability to cope (1 Corinthians 10:13). We know that the situation we find ourselves in won’t overwhelm us. But we can pray and find God’s peace in the midst of these times.

So what should we do when we find ourselves in fearful times? We turn our eyes to look at God and remember who He is. Psalm 121 reminds us, “I lift up my eyes to the mountains—where does my help come from? My help comes from the Lord, the Maker of heaven and earth.” I like to remind myself of three things.

1. God loves me completely, more than anyone else could ever love me. More than I love myself. The Bible tells me that He delights in me. He treats me as a loving Father, always wanting the very best for me.
2. God knows what is best for each of us, and He has promised to work all things together for good for those who love God (Romans 8:28). While I might think I know what is best, He actually knows what is best for each of us. Maybe He will ask us to suffer, but maybe as your neighbours see how you endure hardship it may cause them to want to know Christ. We might think it would be nice to have a comfortable life, but maybe God knows we would be much more joyful to see our neighbour come to Christ or our family to grow closer together or a wayward son to return home and follow Christ. So, knowing us and loving us, He asks us to go through hard times knowing it will be for good.
3. I remind myself that God is all powerful. Nothing—not COVID-19 nor any other situation we might find ourselves in—is a surprise to God. He could eliminate it today, but He chooses not to. While I don’t know why this is happening, I do know that many people are becoming Christians or growing closer to God through this season. God is able to rescue us, He is able to protect us, He is able to provide for us. As a loving Father, He knows what is best and is powerful enough to make that happen.

So take time to remember the promises of God and remember who He is. Remember that He is with you, He loves you, He sees you, and He will work things together for good.