

Invite God into your Fear

Sunday 14th June 2020 (Heidi Curry)

Opening Thought

Would you fall backwards if Jesus told you He was going to catch you, but you couldn't see Him? Would you **trust** Him? Would you **want** to trust Him?

SONG: Way Maker (Leeland) (lyrics on separate sheet)

https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=iJCV_2H9xD0

Opening Prayer

Almighty God, we want to take a minute **not** to ask You for anything, but to simply say **thank you**; thank you for everything we have. You are an amazing God who loves us; our light in the darkness, and that is why we worship You.

Sorry for when we let You down. Sorry for when we hurt people with words. Sorry for when we hurt people in thought. Thank you that when we say sorry, You forgive us every time.

You are a miracle worker. You are a promise keeper. We ask You to bless us this morning and to help us to remember that **nothing** can happen, that we cannot deal with together with You. In Jesus' Name we pray, Amen.

Bible Verse: Joshua 1:9 (NIV)

"⁹ Have I not commanded you? Be strong and courageous. Do not be afraid; do not be discouraged, for the LORD your God will be with you wherever you go."

Address

It feels like an ideal time to focus on trust and, in particular to focus on our fears. I recently read that every decision we make in life is based on one of two things – love or fear – and I tend to agree. Referring back to the opening thought, this means when we are trying to decide whether or not to fall backwards and trust that Jesus will catch us, our decision will be based around whether we **love** Him enough to trust Him, or whether our **fear** will overtake us, and cause us **not** to trust Him – to allow fear to take over.

I am sure that I'm not the only person who likes to know what is happening. I like to make plans and I like to know what to expect. I think my family would agree that at the moment, whilst working from home and schooling from home, living in our house can be like living in a military camp! We have a schedule and we stick to it and – if that schedule goes awry – I just don't cope well! You can begin to imagine what the last twelve weeks has done to me; everything that I had planned, everything that was in my calendar changed! And I literally mean everything! I began to lose control and fear began to take over!

Another thing many people struggle with is a fear of the unknown. I'm sure that I would have coped better as we went into lockdown if someone had given me a clear

timetable of what was going to happen and shown me the end – that way, I could have planned my way from the starting point to the finish – but unfortunately that's not how a global pandemic works is it?! Questions I keep asking myself are "When will life feel normal again? When will I be able to visit family and friends cuddle them? What will need to happen for us to be safe again and how will it happen?" All these unknowns – it is at this point of questioning that we can begin to be consumed by the worry and fear and forget that God is part of it!

Meet our Bible Characters



Joshua, Moses & God

In the part of the Bible story we are looking at (Joshua 1:9) Joshua would have had similar questions about the unknown. Joshua was to take over from Moses; a great leader. Joshua was the son of Moses' servant, so he knew what sort of wonderful leader Moses was.

Moses has died and God has spoken to Joshua and told him that He wants him to take over from where Moses left off! Joshua had a big job and big shoes to fill! God had made a promise to the people of Israel many years before, and God never breaks a promise. He had told the people that He would free them and allow them to inherit lots of land. Moses had started it but now Joshua had to continue God's mission by leading the people across the River Jordan. It wasn't going to be an easy task for Joshua, which is why he would have been asking lots of questions; the future was all an unknown to him. God knew how overwhelmed Joshua felt, which is why He said those words in verse 9: "Have I not commanded you? Be strong and courageous. Do not be afraid; do not be discouraged, for the LORD your God will be with you wherever you go."

The words 'Be strong and courageous' appear four times within that one chapter alone! God was not going to leave Joshua. He was going to be there every step of the way and Joshua hadn't to let his fear of the unknown take over, otherwise he would have lost his focus on God.

If we allow it to, our fear about what the future holds, can consume us, take over us and stop us from seeing God. God wants to help us with that fear – He doesn't promise to take it away, but He does say that He will never leave us.

There were some pretty powerful words sung in our opening worship song this morning, which said:

- *Even when I can't see it, You're working*
- *Even when I can't feel it, You're working*
- *You never stop, You never stop working*

Another question some of us might be asking is where is God in all of this? It might sometimes feel like He has been

a bit silent during these past few weeks, but the silence does not mean He has gone; it does not mean He is not at work.

God is working miracles – I listened to Nicky Gumbel speaking on the Gas Street Church website recently and he said he has never known anything like what's happening! Hundreds of people are turning to God – this lockdown has given them time to think, and their fear of the unknown (that barrier of having to walk into a church building) has been removed because they can encounter God through Zoom, through YouTube, through Facebook, in the safety of their own home! How wonderful is that!

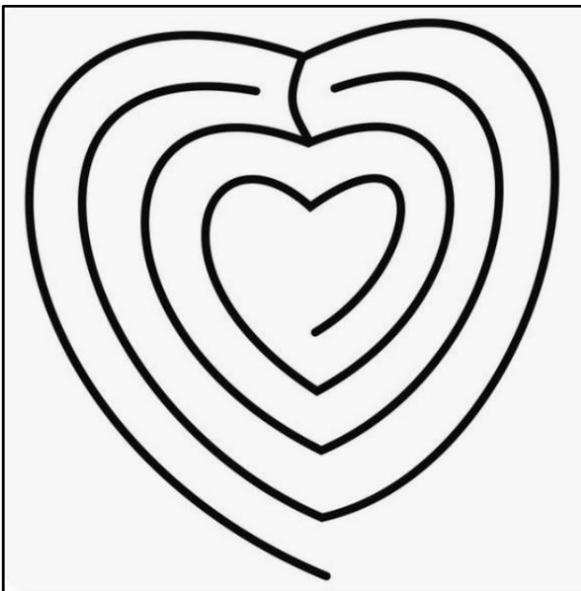
One challenge you might wish to consider is how are we going to change the way we do church? Do we think we can just go back to doing things the way we have always done them, or will we recognise that God is at work and there is going to be a new normal? When we are deciding whether to embrace that change, will we make that decision through love, or fear?

When we let our fears take over us, they can get in the way of our relationship with God, but remember, God commanded Joshua to be strong and courageous and He continues to remind us to do the same. I encourage you, if you have not already done so, to take your fears to God. Not with the expectation that He will remove them, but knowing that He will be right there with you – we all feel better when we share our problems (a problem shared, is a problem halved!)

Are you willing to let yourself fall backwards, even though you can't see Jesus? Will you *trust* Him? Do you *want* to trust Him? God knows when the end of this will come; He has already planned it, we just have to go with it, trusting that our God loves us and will never leave us. Amen.

SONG: Our God (Chris Tomlin) (lyrics on separate sheet)
<https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=NJpt1hSYf2o>

Labyrinth Prayers of Intercession



You are invited to trace your finger through the prayer labyrinth as we pray for other people and ourselves.

Begin your prayer by slowly tracing the labyrinth path, travelling to the heart at the centre. As you go, you are aware that God is with you every step of that pathway. We all have a deep need to know that we are not alone and to know that we are loved; God can meet that need.

As you reach the heart at the centre, pray:

Almighty God, we bring before You those people who need to know that You are near; all the thousands of key workers who have been pushed to their limits these past weeks, along with our government; they are all working tirelessly to get us through this pandemic.

We bring before You people who are grieving – those who have lost precious members of their family or friends, whether it be due to the virus or due to other reasons. We ask that they can encounter Your peace and receive Your blessing as they continue in their grief.

Stay at the centre for a little while and spend some time reflecting on how you feel. Bring your fears, bring your uncertainty, bring your worries to God – He hears everything you speak within your heart. He is right beside you.

When you are ready, return along the same path, back the way you came. Return thankfully and gratefully, knowing that God has heard you. As you exit the labyrinth, give thanks to Him for everything He has done, everything He is doing, and everything that is still to come. Amen.

SONG: Is He Worthy? (lyrics on separate sheet)
<https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=fs7Kah6wnY8>

Blessing

Does the Father truly love us? **He does!**

Does His Spirit move among us? **He does!**

Does Jesus our Messiah hold forever those He loves?

He does!

Does our God intend to dwell again with us? **He does!**

Know this morning that He *is* worthy, of all blessing and honour and glory.

As our world continues to move through a plan known only to God - know that there is no need to fear alone. God will never leave us; we can absolutely trust Him and He loves us more than we can ever know. Amen.