

F. E. A. R.  
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Will you pray with me? May the words of my mouth and the meditations in all of our hearts be pleasing in your sight, dear Lord.

On October 12, 1960 the North Coast of Washington State was hit by a fierce storm with Hurricane force winds. It didn't last long but It rained and rained and the winds blew down everything that wasn't well anchored.

My Mom and Dad had built their dream house on the top of a hill out on the East Hoquiam Road overlooking the river. Dad was working the 4 to 12 swing shift when the storm hit. The lights went out, the phones went out, and Mom and her Grandson were home together. As a teenager Gary was looking out for Grandma.

Now when they built this dream home on top of the hill they put in a huge one piece window. It took up nearly the entire wall. They had an amazing view of the entire valley and river below. As the winds got stronger, Mom noticed that this huge window was flexing.

All she could think about was how much money that darned window had cost. So without thinking of the consequences she and my 14 year old nephew put their fear aside and decided to hold that window in place until the winds died down.

Dad left work at midnight and it took him a long time to get home because there were so many trees down. He was one of the few that made it out before the road was closed. When he got close to home, at the bottom of the hill, he looked up and saw that the window was still in one piece. He was puzzled but thought well, maybe the winds hadn't been as bad on top of the hill. Then he started up the drive. Trees were down all over the property, out buildings were down, and everything was a real mess.

When he got in the house and found out why the window was still in one piece, oh boy, he was really mad at my mom. But he hugged her and told her how much he loved her. Then he, not so patiently, explained in language that can't be used here today, just how foolish she had been, didn't she realize that if that heavy glass window had broken it probably would have cut her fool head off. Dad said that while the window was indeed expensive, it was really cheap compared to her life. And where in God's name were her brains anyway? Had she forgotten they had insurance for just that sort of thing?

She said that she had never even considered what would have happened if the window had broken with her pushing against it, she just prayed that it wouldn't break and the storm would be over soon. She had faith that God would do what she prayed for. Which is exactly what happened.

Dad thanked God, but remained pretty mad at Mom for her foolishness. From then on until they sold the house we all referred to the huge window as "Mom's window." I Sometimes wonder if Mom's window is still there.

Our story today is not about faith as my mom's was, but lack of faith. It is about fear. The scripture tells us the disciples were overcome with fear.

Fear is a natural defensive device. It can be a good thing as long as you don't let it get the best of you. You need a little fear to keep you from doing really stupid things. Well, most of us anyway.

However, uncontrolled, unreasonable fear can do you a lot of harm. Your blood pressure shoots up, your heart begins to beat faster, extra adrenalin goes into the bloodstream, you start to sweat, your hands get clammy, you get all stressed, this is very wearing on your body, you can get diverticulitis... Yet we all know of people so frightened they can't leave their homes, or fly in a plane, or drive in a car.

I once drove a group of people over to Williams to prepare for a VIM trip to Chile. One woman sitting in the back seat gasp every time a car passed us, and would make frightened sounds. I thought I was going to have a nervous breakdown before we got back. She had an unreasonable fear of riding in a car. I had an unreasonable urge to tell her to put a sock in it.

John Madden the former coach of the Oakland Raiders, was on a flight from Tampa to Oakland in 1978. He suffered a panic attack and has never flown since then. He says it is not fear of flying, it is Claustrophobia, which we all know is a fear of being closed in small places, and having no escape. He retired from coaching that year, he could no longer fly with the team.

Everyone of us knows what it is to be afraid. Maybe all of us even know what it means to be on the verge of panic.

That is sort of where the disciples were that night, in that boat. I wonder if they would have been so frightened, so panicked, if Jesus had been awake? But to see him curled up sleeping was just more than they could bear.

Did you know that on any given night in these United States 70 million hard-core insomniacs are pacing their floors. That doesn't count those who spend a night or two every now and then catching up on office work, confronting annoying co-workers, solving problems like global warming, or trying to figure how to make one month's salary, pay two months' bills.

There is a huge market for things to aid us in our sleep. Herbal remedies, sleeping pills, sleep music, white noise machines, ear plugs, eye shades, adjustable beds, air beds, memory foam beds and complete isolation tanks! Whatever that is. All designed to help us shut out the world and slow down our minds.

I used to have a lot of trouble sleeping. (Well, I still do but not for the same reason) I am a worrier! and worry is just another name for fear. I worry about anything and everything. If I don't have something real to worry about I seem to be able to manufacture something. Anyway, I'd go to bed and the minute the light went out my mind would start going around and around. So I would turn the light back on and read until I would fall asleep, many times with the light on, sometimes with the light on all night.

I finally learned that if I started saying the Lord's prayer each night as I lay in bed, it helped calm my mind. At first I had to repeat it quite a few times, but after awhile I would start and just a few lines into it, my mind would drift off and I would wake up refreshed in the morning. God and I have been working on this and so now it isn't worry that rules my sleep it is all these darned little aches and pains that go with AGE ING.

Well our scripture today tells us that the crowds were huge and Jesus told his disciples to get in the boat and go across the lake, and this is what they do.

Jesus is exhausted from all he had done that day. So he just curls up, shuts his eyes and he is asleep. He is at peace, safe and secure in the knowledge that his father will always be at his side.

These poor fishermen were **not** very secure in their new found faith and quite often it wavered. There Jesus is, sleeping as if he didn't have a care in the world. They were afraid, they had forgotten what Jesus could do. They had forgotten what Isaiah told us in chapter 43 verse 2 "When you pass through the waters, I will be with you; and through rivers, they shall not overflow you. When you walk through the fire, you shall not be burned, nor shall the flame scorch you."

Do you know what fear is? Well Pastor James Merritt says It is, **Forgetting Every Available Resource.** and who is our best resource? That's right **GOD!**

2nd Timothy chapter 1 verse 7 says, "For God has **not** given us a spirit of fear, but of **power** and of **love** and of a **sound mind.**" 1st John chapter 4 verse 18 says, "Perfect love casts out fear." We have no need to be fearful when we have Jesus at our side. But we all seem to forget that at times. We are a lot like those disciples, who had to be reminded, crossing that body of water on a stormy night.

There was a time when John Wesley was not very secure in his faith. He was coming to America and found himself in the middle of a storm. He had not yet had his Aldersgate experience and he was just plain scared to death. He was running around the ship looking for a safe place when he happened on a group of Moravians. They were singing and praying and not one person, not even the children were afraid. When John asked them where their strength came from, they replied "We have Jesus as our Savior." He came to greatly admire the Moravians on that trip.

Dr. Bill Bouknight tells a story about fear when he was a young preacher. He noticed a new family had moved into the neighborhood, and decided to just stop by without calling. He saw that there was a car in the carport so he went to the side door and rang the bell. Before he could ring it a second time he heard a terrible deep growl coming from the back of the carport. About 20 feet away was a very large German Shepherd, with very big teeth and malevolent eyes. As he started backing away slowly in the direction of his car he was speaking words of pastoral comfort to the dog. This huge creature eased in his direction keeping the same 20 feet between them.

"It must have been a Baptist dog; I never saw a dog in my life have such a problem with a Methodist Preacher." he said. When he finally reached his car he jumped in slammed the door quickly, and offered a quick prayer of thanks for heavenly protection. He wasn't worth much for the rest of the day, fear had stolen his energy. But when he got home he made a phone call. He called his friend the Baptist Preacher and told him that a new family had moved into the neighborhood and he was pretty sure they were Baptist!

Let's face it, fear has a tendency to get the better of all of us at one time or another. What do we do when we are afraid and Jesus says we shouldn't be? I think the answer is contained in this one short sentence: '**There is no promise that we'll be delivered from trouble; but there is a promise that we are not alone.**' We can face a lot of fear when there is absolute certainty that God is there.

It is my understanding that the Sea of Galilee is a really beautiful place, 680 feet below sea level, six miles across, there are 2000 foot mountains on the eastern edge, with funnel-like valleys. It is easy to understand how sudden storms frequently transform a glassy sea into a fierce, storming, frightening place.

The wind starts to blow, waves start to get higher, the rain begins, the boat is filling with water, there are 13 people in that small boat. 12 of them are scared nearly to death, the 13th calmly sleeps in the stern. They wake him and say to him, "Teacher, do you not care that we are perishing?"

Blessed Jesus in a soft voice calmed the seas with "Quiet, Be still!" then he asks his disciples "Why are you so fearful? How is it that you have no faith?"

They had forgotten what Jesus could do. You know he asks them this question in several places in the Gospels. He has done so many miracles already, it seems redundant to have to ask, "How is it that you have no faith?" Yet they do seem to forget from time to time what he can do.

How many times have we asked our Lord and Savior Jesus Christ, Where are you? Why haven't you answered my prayers? Why haven't you heard me? Yet when we look back across the years, we are sometimes surprised to find that he had been there. That he had heard. That he has answered.

November 6, 1977, 39 people were killed when a dam burst in Toccoa Falls Georgia. A group of psychologists studied the families of the victims and found those who had a strong faith in God handled the tragedy much better than those without strong faith. Why? Because faith in God helps determine what is happening in us while the storms are happening to us.

Even today with all of the knowledge we have, it all comes down to faith. Which is stronger our fear or our faith? We have all of the tools to overcome fear, to strengthen our faith. Prayer is always first on my list. But we have to cultivate a friendship with God. Prayer, bible study and church attendance, bring us closer to him.

Keep in mind, to build a friendship you have to spend time with that friend. Yes, even a friendship with Jesus.

When I was a child I used to go to a prayer meeting every Wednesday evening with our neighbor and my best friend's mother. I seem to remember I went for the sweet tea and

treats, but for an hour we prayed for each person on our list out loud and by name. An hour spent in prayer with Jesus by our side, that was so powerful, even for a little girl.....of course television was in its infancy then, and most people we knew didn't have a TV, so there was still time to spend an hour in prayer.

Jesus has promised that he will never fail or forsake us. His grace will always be sufficient for us. **Remember that phrase** "Jesus has promised that he will never forsake us. His grace will be sufficient for us." In times of fear that phrase is a comfort.

A young woman recalls a day from her childhood that she will never forget. She was playing in the sand of a beach near where she lived, building castles with her bucket and shovel. She had wandered away from her parents, when suddenly a large wave knocked her off her feet into the ocean. She managed to get up on her feet, but the sand was unstable and when another wave hit, down she went. She cried out for her parents, but all she could see was the huge ocean ahead of her. She thought she was lost, when two strong arms reached out and grabbed her, pulling her to safety. "Don't be afraid, I've been watching you all this time," her father said.

Those are the words of our Lord and Savior, Jesus Christ. "Don't be afraid, I've been watching you all this time." Why are we afraid? Have we no faith?

Let the people say Amen