

HOLY FEAR



You will be delivered up even by parents and brothers and kinsmen and friends, and some of you they will put to death; you will be hated by all for my name's sake.

But not a hair of your head will perish.

By your endurance you will gain your lives.

Luke 21:16-19

These words of Jesus have been preserved to us, because Jesus was not just speaking to those disciples.

He was speaking---is speaking---
to us.

He makes clear that as we near the end of this age there will be increased turbulence and terror on every level. Nature will be out of kilter. Nations will be at war. Human suffering will reach its peak.

How close we are to the final crisis, only God knows. But the outlook for us appears to be tough times ahead.

So the Lord says to us, as we face the coming days:

To endure the turbulence that lies ahead, there is one essential which we all lack to some degree:

It's called the fear of God.

Strange as it may seem, the fear of God sets us free from all other fear and keeps us strong.

Peter and his companions were dead tired. They'd been out there fishing all night with nothing to show for it. This was how they made their living, and it was another wasted night. They were wrapping it up and getting ready to go home, have breakfast and go to bed. But here comes a crowd of people following Jesus along the shore. Peter is not pleased to see Jesus. "Hey Peter, I need to use your boat."

What can he say? Jesus sits in the boat and teaches the people gathered on the shore, while Peter, tired, grumpy and half-asleep, steadies the boat. Now the teaching is over. Jesus turns to Peter and says, "Okay Peter, let's go out there and do some fishing."

"Master, we were out there all night, and caught nothing. It's no good out there. But if you say so, I'll let down the nets."

Peter's net comes up so full of fish it's tearing apart. Does Peter shout, "Hallelujah! Look at them fish! Praise the Lord!"

No. Peter is terrified. He falls at Jesus' knees and says, "*Get away from me Lord, I'm a sinful man.*"



"Don't be afraid, from now on you're going to be catching people."

"Don't be afraid...."

Peter's response to that net full of fish was fear, a fear that changed his life. In Psalm 25 there is a verse that explains exactly what was going on with Peter that day.

It says....

***The secret of the Lord is with them that fear him.
And he will show them his Covenant.***

The secret of the Lord is with them that fear him.

Fear him? Are we supposed to fear God?

There is a debate going on among us these days about fearing God. There are those who say, "Why should we fear God? God is love!"

And there are others who are forever looking over their shoulder, scared to death that God is going to give them another whack.

And there are those who think that because they have the Holy Spirit, they can lay aside their fear, relax and be a little lazy, a little glib, a little loose with the tongue.

But why *should* we fear God, if God is love?

Yes, God is love. His mercy is deeper than the sea. But we never know that love---*we never know that love*--- until we see what Peter saw that day.

Peter didn't just see a mess of fish flopping in his net.

He saw the holiness of God, and it scared him to death.



“The secret of the Lord...”

What secret? why is God so secret? Why is God always hidden from our sight?

It's easy to proclaim, "God is in this place!" Is he? Maybe we're just playing church. Maybe it's all talk and tradition. Maybe our so-called "belief system" is just another crutch we lean on to get us through our weary lives.

But all that changes, once we see what Peter saw. And we will see what Peter saw when the Lord opens our eyes---as he opened Peter's eyes.

Listen to Jesus in Matthew 11.

No one knows who the Son is, but the Father.

No one knows who Jesus really is but God himself. No one.

***And no one knows who the Father is, except the Son,
and anyone to whom the Son chooses to reveal him.***

The Son is the Revealer of God. He's been revealing God to the human race since the beginning of history. He's doing it all the time, not just in our churches, but everywhere!

But we never see what Jesus reveals, until we have what Peter had that day:



Holy fear.

Suppose that during church, a stranger came quietly through the door, walked up the aisle, and flopped down in an empty pew. He looks like a man who hasn't had a bath in a month. The stranger leans over and begins to weep; he sobs and sobs! While the stranger is weeping, a few people here and there begin to tremble for no reason. Some of them even weep. The rest of us shake our heads and say, "What's wrong with those people?" What we don't understand is that "those people" have been struck with holy fear. And now their eyes open. They no longer see a man who hasn't bathed in a month. They're looking at an angel. The stranger gets up and quietly leaves the church. We never see him again. But those who saw that stranger for who he actually is, walk out of here with their hearts on fire.

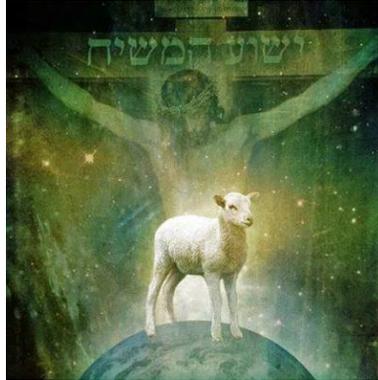
***The secret of the Lord is with them that fear him.
And he will show them his Covenant.***

“He will show them his Covenant?”

What covenant?

The Covenant God made with the whole weary human race at Calvary.....

It began about 4,000 years ago, when the God of the universe, for reasons known only to him, comes to this sad little planet and makes his home among the Jews, the most despised tribe on earth. Over the centuries God tussles with these Jews. He watches over them, protects them, blesses them, yet time and again they turn away and reject him. God never gives up on them, always finds a way to redeem them. Then at their Feast of the Passover in Jerusalem, a few years before the Temple is destroyed for the last time, God himself, in a mystery, becomes their Passover Lamb.



As the body of the strange Jewish Prophet, Jeshua, expires, the very universe trembles as this Passover Lamb sucks all the evil, all the sin, all the corruption, sadness, misery and death into himself and consumes it.

It's gone! All of it!



A Covenant of Forgiveness

So that every soul who has ever lived or will ever live on this planet is given a clean slate, a chance for a new start.

“And I, when I am lifted up from the earth (on the cross) will draw all people to myself.”

John 12

It's a Covenant of forgiveness, a door to heaven for the whole human race. But this Covenant becomes effective in our lives only when we have learned the fear of God.

We can go to church for years and years, sing praises, listen to sermons, pray prayers----and never actually connect with God...

Until we see what Peter saw.

Until we do what Peter did.

Until we learn the fear of God.

“How can you say such things?” you protest. “Jesus never preached fear. He only preached love.” A very popular idea these days. But take a closer look.

Listen to Jesus....

I tell you, my friends, do not fear those who kill the body, and after that have no more that they can do. But I will warn you whom to fear: fear him who, after he has killed, has power to cast into hell; yes, I tell you, fear him!

Are not five sparrows sold for two pennies? And not one of them is forgotten before God. Why, even the hairs of your head are all numbered.

Fear not; you are of more value than many sparrows.

Luke 12

In other words,

“Fear God, and you won’t have to be afraid of anything else.”

So what does it mean to fear God?

God is not a tyrant, a monster, a bully. There are people who, every time something bad happens to them, are convinced that God is picking on them. “Why is God picking on me? What have I done to deserve all this trouble?”

God doesn’t pick on anybody. He’s our Father who knows everything about us. How many hairs are on our heads, how many breaths we have drawn since our birth, all our sins, all our sorrows, all our shame.

And, for all that, loves us with unspeakable love.

But--God is holy.



If we were to come before him in our present state, we’d burn to a crisp.

God’s name is holy.

You take off your shoes in his presence.

“Get away from me, Lord! I am a sinful man.”

“Don’t be afraid. From now on you will be catching people.”

“Don’t be afraid.”

Peter is delivered from all fear except one: the fear of God.

Even after we have come into his Kingdom...

Even after we’re “filled with the Spirit”...

We never abandon that holy fear.

Perhaps someone is shaking their head and saying, "Maybe you fear God, but I don't. I have no idea what you're talking about. Is there something wrong with me?" Very few of us were brought up in the fear of God. We hear that God is love all our lives. But fear God? Not these days!

Well, Moses didn't fear God either, until the day he stumbled across that burning bush and heard a voice telling him "Take off your shoes! You're standing on holy ground!" 80 years old, and he didn't know anything about the fear of God until that day.



But now, the same God who told Moses to take off his shoes, the same God who terrified Peter on the Sea of Galilee, is moving across the earth preparing us for turbulent times ahead by teaching us how to think, how to behave, when we're standing on holy ground.

If we're going to live without fear through the coming storms, we need to learn to take off our shoes when we're on holy ground. We're going to learn to fear God. And God is going to help us, just like he helped Moses and Joshua and Peter and Mary.

Many years ago a man named Jim showed up at Messiah Church in Detroit. During the service the Spirit convicted Jim. The sermon had hardly ended when Jim got up, walked down the aisle to the altar rail, and before he knelt to pray, he took off his shoes. Why did he take off his shoes? Because at that moment Jim was moved by the fear of God. He knew he was standing on holy ground. In Jim's case it lasted about two weeks. Then he was back to his old ways.

But for all of us the act of constantly humbling ourselves before a Holy God becomes the doorway to life lived inside God's Covenant, a life guided and protected by the hand of God. So if we lack that holy fear, we will do ourselves a favor by asking God to help us find it. *Lord, show us what it is to live with holy joy and holy fear at the same time. Bring us to the place where we see what Peter saw....*

Open our eyes to the terrifying glory of your Kingdom!



***The secret of the Lord is with them that fear him.
And he will show them his Covenant.***

Prayer: Yes, dear Lord. open our eyes to what Peter saw... your perfect holiness. Strike us with holy fear. Drop us to our knees. Forgive us. Forgive us for our separation from you. Forgive us for our failure to keep you on the throne of our hearts. May we never abandon a holy fear of you. And precious Lord, we know that in holy fear we will receive the endurance to face persecution, the endurance to face loss, the endurance to face darkness, the endurance to face anything with holy joy because you hold us in your everlasting arms. Amen.

Richard Bieber 2019 sermon in Nova Scotia

Art: Various stills from the Bible Project animations (mostly from [Holiness](#)) and art in the public domain.

Maranatha Mirror Messages

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