**Text: Matthew 10:26-31**

**Subject: Don’t Be Afraid of The Darkness!**

I remember when I was a little, little boy, I used to be afraid of the dark. I didn’t like it when I had to turn out the lights in order to go to sleep. I don’t why, and I don’t know what I was so afraid of, but surely, my mind was working overtime to produce a perception that something would happen to me because it was dark.

 Now, psychologists define this type of fear as Nyctophobia which is an extreme fear of night or darkness that can cause intense symptoms of anxiety and depression. A fear becomes a phobia when it’s excessive, irrational, or impacts your day-to-day life.

They say that being afraid of the dark often starts in childhood and is viewed as a normal part of development. Studies focused on these phobias have shown that we often fear the dark because of its lack of visual stimuli. In other words, we fear the night and darkness because we cannot see what’s around us.

This scientific definition is consistent with the Greek definition of the type of fear found in our text. In Matthew 10:26, the Lord Jesus speaking to His disciples said, “have no fear of them, for nothing is covered that will not be revealed, or hidden that will not be known.”

Here, the word fear is the Greek word *phobos* which is where the word phobia is derived. It is defined as something we think on, and think on, and think on, and the more we think about it, it becomes more and more intense, and we become more and more anxious and nervous.

Ultimately, if we are not careful, these phobias will cause us to live in a constant state of dread and terror whereby it may begin to impact our day to day lives. And when that happens, we will not be able to fully enjoy our lives nor will be profitable in the Kingdom of God.

Now, in our text, the Lord Jesus Christ extends the meaning of darkness from actual darkness to the type of darkness that we can’t always put our fingers on, but we know that something is happening somewhere behind the scenes, or somewhere behind closed doors.

He said, ***have no fear of them, for nothing is covered that will not be revealed, or hidden that will not be known*.** In other words, specifically, He was talking about the plotting and planning of the Pharisees who, behind closed doors, would try to derail the earthly ministry of the Lord Jesus Christ and His disciples.

The Lord Jesus also knew that if the disciples focused on what was being said and done in darkness, they might become wrought with dread and terror and as a result, they would not be able to make the lasting impact on the world that they had been chosen to make.

So it is with us. We are in a similar situation because we too are living in an environment where there’s a lot of darkness that manifests itself as hidden things, alternative facts, and pseudo-realities.

In other words, there are a lot of dark things that seem to be happening behind closed doors which are causing us a lot of angst and anxiety because what is being said is not adding up to what is actually being done.

For example, it seems like we just can’t put our fingers on it but somehow we know that something is not quite right. Our realities are one thing but what we see in the news is another thing. As a result, we, at best, are uneasy. But, at worse, we are nervous and anxious because somehow intuitively we know that something is not adding up.

Therefore, we are forced to think about it, and think about it until we have developed a phobia about it-- so much that it has begun to impact our day to day lives because we are so wrought with fear.

For example, with Covid-19, at first, we were told that it wasn’t that bad. Then, more than any other group, people of color began to come down with the virus in a vicious and deadly way where people around us started passing away left and right.

As a result, we didn’t know what to believe because our realities weren’t adding up to what was being told to us.

Then, when it caught on, that the virus was “that bad,” then we were pounded each and every day with news reports about how bad things were.

As a result, we got settled in our new reality of fear. However, the downside was we grew settled in our fears and now many people have developed fears and phobias that are so intense that it is difficult for them to go outside of their homes.

Again, this is so because we have been pounded with so much bad news, and because, to some extent, we still feel like we are not being given enough, or the right information.

In other words, all of a sudden, now, there is a rush to re-open the National economy because the “numbers” are looking better but overall, they are still very high in comparison to other countries.

For instance, just this morning, I saw a chart which compared the seven-day rolling average of new Corona cases of the United States and the European Union from March 1st through June 21st .

And what it showed was that at its high point, the US had 32,000 new cases in April. It fell as low as 20,000 in the beginning of June but now it is back up to 28,300 new cases as of a week ago.

In comparison, the EU had a high point of 30,000 new cases in the beginning of April but as of last week, their new cases dropped down to 3,400.

What that means is that EU is coming out of the pandemic, but the US is still right smack dap in the middle of it. This is true even though the numbers in the DMV are dropping, and even though restrictions are being lifted. As a result, we should stay alert and continue to take proper precautions, but we should be afraid of the darkness that this pandemic brings.

At the same time, many are developing intense fears and phobias because we feel like somebody is trying to pull the wool over our eyes concerning foreign affairs.

For example, now we are starting to see news reports of bounties being placed on the heads of our men and women in the armed forces who are still in battle in Afghanistan by enemies of our country. Yet, supposedly some leaders knew about it but didn’t do anything about it and a result, many people are starting to feel less and less secure.

Of course, the list goes on, and on, and on. Therefore, many people are shell shocked and wrought with fears and phobias, and are walking around like zombies because the rhetoric is not adding up to our realities.

However, there is some Good News today because like the disciples, the Lord Jesus Christ is telling us, that we should not be afraid because nothing is covered that will not be revealed, or hidden that will not be known. In other words, Don’t Be Afraid of the Darkness!

Now, let’s press on this a little further because if we look real closely at our text, we see a few things that we can hold onto during these times of fear and uncertainty.

The first thing we can hold onto is the fact The Jesus Christ is right here with us in the midst of our darkness. We know this because in verse 27, He said, ***“what I tell you in the dark, say in the light.”***

In other words, it would not make sense for the Lord Jesus to say what I tell you in the dark, if He was not right there with them in the dark. And if He was right there in the dark with them, then that means He is right there with us, in the midst of our darkness.

This statement connotes a sense of privacy and intimacy which means that He is very aware, and is very concerned, about what we are going through because He is going through it with us. Further, we know this is true because before He ascended into heaven, He said, lo, I am with you always, even unto the end of the world.

And Family, the last I checked, we haven’t reached the end of the world even though it seems like we are getting close to it.

And because we haven’t reached the end of the world, that means that we can have blessed assurance that The Lord Jesus is standing right here with us now, and He will continue to stand us, during these dark and difficult times that we are going through.

That means we are not alone, and because of that we should not be afraid of the darkness that we are standing in. I guess that’s why we give little children who are afraid of the darkness teddy bears and comfort blankets because just the feeling that someone is right there with us in the midst of our darkness gives us peace and comfort in knowing that we are not alone.

And what we should know is that we don’t have to depend on a teddy bear. Instead, we can depend on the fact that The Lord Jesus Christ is standing right here with us in these dark times that we are going through.

Not only that but while the Lord Jesus Christ is standing with us, He is also speaking to us.

In our text, in verse 27, He said, what I tell you in the dark, say in the light, and what you hear whispered, proclaim on the housetops.

This is very good news because right now, many people can only hear the voice of fear because of all of the bad news that we are hearing and thinking about each and every day.

And let me remind you that the more we think on a thing, the more intense it becomes, and the more intense it becomes, the more wrought with terror and dread we become.

And because of that, we are not able to fully enjoy our lives and at the same time, we are not able to make a lasting impact on the world with the Gospel of Jesus Christ.

This is by design because the enemy figures that if he could keep us wound and bound, and wrought with fear, then we will be ineffective and unprofitable in spreading the Good News to those who really need to hear it.

And certainly, Church, if there was ever a time that people are thirsting for some Good News, it surely is right now.

In other words, if we are bogged down with fear because we feel alone and forsaken, or if we have bought into the bad news, then it will be impossible to share the Gospel of Jesus Christ with fidelity, with anybody else, because at this point, we don’t fully believe it ourselves.

However, this should not be so because our text tells that The Lord Jesus is with us, and that He is speaking to us, even in the midst of our darkness. And at the same time, He is telling us, that we have a responsibility to shout from the rooftop, the Good News that He is speaking to us.

That is why He said, what I tell you in the dark, SAY in the light, and what you hear whispered, PROCLAIM on the housetops.

Therefore, the question becomes, are we hearing what The Lord Jesus Christ is telling us in His Word? And do we really believe what He is telling us? And if so, are we willing to proclaim the truth of the Gospel to others who do not know Him?

Or, are we so wrought with fear, and doubt and worry that our message has been diluted by our unbelief that the Lord Jesus Christ is with us always even until the end of the world and that He is speaking to us in the time of our darkness?

Let’s take this a little deeper because our text even tells us what the Lord Jesus Christ was saying to the disciples in the time of their darkness and what He is saying to us in the time of our darkness.

In verse 28, He said, ***“and do not fear those who kill the body but cannot kill the soul.”*** Now, this statement is deep to me because He was saying that we should not afraid of the decision makers who perpetuate the culture of death that we live in this country.

For example, we know we are living in a culture of death because we have lost 126,000 lives due to the CoronaVirus but it seems like no seems to care.

It is also apparent that we live in a culture of death because of the many lives of black and brown people that have been lost at the hands of those who have been called to serve and protect the very lives that have been lost.

To add insult to injury, since 1776, this country has been at war 227 of the 244 years since the signing of the Declaration of the Independence. That means we have lived in a culture of death for 93% of the time, which equals to less than 20 years that this country has been at peace. And the percentage of death is even higher for African Americans if we factor in slavery which started in 1619, and the vestiges of slavery which are still going on now.

As a result, we have been suffering from PTSD and the intense fear of those making decisions for us, because for most of the time, they have decided to continue a culture of death.

However, the Lord Jesus was saying that we should not be afraid of those who continue to chose death over the body because one thing they cannot kill or control is the condition of our souls.

Rather, we are the ones who can chose what happens with our souls—whether we are well within our souls—or whether our souls go to heaven, or whether they go to hell. No man, or no one can make that choice for us.

Perhaps that why the writer of the Book of Hebrews said in Hebrews 13:6, we may boldy say, The Lord is my helper, and I will not fear what man shall do unto me.

We don’t have to fear man because we have God helping us especially when we chose to listen to what The Lord Jesus Christ is trying to us in the Word of God concerning who is control of our souls.

In fact, in our text, in verse 28, He said, that we should be afraid of those who kill the body. Rather, we should fear Him who can destroy both soul and body in hell.

Here, theologians seem to believe, and I agree, that what God is saying is that we should have a *eulabeia* type of fear towards God.

In other words, in the Greek, this type of fear is a fear of awe and reverence of God, and that we ought be cautious of the way we approach Him.

Hebrews 12:28 says, wherefore we receiving a kingdom which cannot be moved, let us have grace, whereby we may serve God acceptably with reverence and godly fear. For our God is a consuming fire.

We should also keep in mind James 4:12 whish says, there is only One lawgiver and judge, He who is able to save and to destroy.

Let me put this together. God is in control of everything and just because those who are in power have chosen to keep us living in a culture of death, we should not be afraid of what is being said and done in darkness, because none of them have any control over our souls.

Therefore, we should continue to approach God with awe and reverence with a godly fear because ultimately, He is the One who will have the final say over what happens to our souls.

As a result, we should be always paying attention of the condition of souls because we do want to be found blameless and without spot even though we have sinned and fallen short of the glory of God.

At the same time, we should be continuously monitoring the condition of our souls to make sure we are not wrought with a stifling fear, dread or terror based on the culture of death that we currently live in.

Instead of being led by dread, instead, we should know that our lives are of great value to God and because of that He is going to see us through these dark and dismal times that we are going through.

We know this is true because our text, in verses 29-31, we find these words. (READ from the Bible).

Here, the Lord Jesus is comparing the value of our lives with that of the life of sparrows. In verse 29b He is saying that two sparrows are sold for a penny which means they have some value.

And with that low value, God keeps them flying in the sky because they are still connected with God even if they are flying through a storm. He said, and not one of them will fall to the ground apart from your Father.

Now, I guess if we felt like singing, we would sing: His eye is on the sparrow, and I know He watches me.

And we know He is watching over us more than the sparrows especially during these dark times because our text in verse 30-31 says, that even the hairs on your head are all numbered.

That means even if we have lost all of hair, God is still aware of the hair follicles because He is the One who numbered them when we were shaped and formed in our mother’s wombs. In essence, what that means is that God is paying close attention to every detail of our lives and as a result, we should be afraid, because is watching over us.

We should also not be afraid of the darkness because like two sparrows have the value of a penny, and yet He keeps them flying through a storm, we are of more value than many sparrows.

Let me press here for a minute because in the Greek, the word value means “to carry though” “driven to and fro” “to surpass” “to transport.”

Now, I must admit that at first, I thought I was reading the wrong definition because it didn’t make sense that value would mean any thing other than greater importance or better than, or something like that.

However, when we think about the context and the comparison with sparrows, it makes sense. It makes sense because even at a low value of life of sparrows, God is with them so much that He will not allow for them to fall from the sky.

Therefore, with such a high value that God places on our lives, God is with us even more so much that He will carry us through these dark and stormy times that we are going through.

You see, we have this valuable treasure in these earthen vessels that the power is from God and not from ourselves. And it is with this power that God will see us through.

He will bring us through.

He will also be with us as we are going through.

 And He will speak to us in the midst of our darkness.

Therefore we should not be afraid of the darkness because the Lord Jesus Christ is standing with us, and is speaking to us, and with never leave nor forsake us, and will be with us even until the end of time.

Therefore, Don’t Be Afraid of the Darkness!