

Where Is God When We're Scared?

The sermon this past week focused on the stark contrast between fear and faith, between Psalm 22 and Psalm 23.

1. Warm up question: At the outset of his sermon, Alex told about a terrible car crash he experienced. Have you ever been in a crash? What happened?
2. At the time of Alex' crash, he was just weeks away from leaving Australia to follow his call to prepare for ministry in seminary. "What I remember most of all [about the moment of my crash]," he said, "what troubled me the most, was the irrational dread that in those moments, if I had died, God might not let me into heaven."
 - a. Have you ever had a narrow scrape with death? If so, what thoughts and feelings flashed through your heart in that moment?
 - b. If you were to suddenly find yourself facing death, do you think you would fear not getting into heaven? Why or why not?
 - c. For Alex, his fear of being turned away from heaven stemmed from lingering subconscious worry that God might reject him for being gay. If you're gay and suddenly found yourself facing death, do you think you might suddenly worry about being rejected for being gay? If so, where does that fear come from? And how do we ever overcome it?
 - d. Of course, there are many things besides being gay that we might fear could separate us from the love of God. Alex put the question this way: "What fear do you carry in your heart that strikes you at such a gut level that you think it could very well threaten your salvation?"
3. As he crawled out of the wreckage, Alex also found himself thinking, "Why now God? I had just moved heaven and earth to follow the calling you placed on my life, uproot myself from my family and friends and a secure job, travel 10,000 miles to the church and seminary you had placed on my heart. Why now God . . . ?" Alex found himself wondering if this was sign from God – God's way of disaffirming his calling to ministry. When in your life has something bad happened that caused you to question whether God was trying to get your attention, correct you, or punish you? Do you think God works that way?
4. Read Psalm 22:1-18. This is one of the most famous "psalms of lament."
 - a. As best you can imagine, what might have been happening in the life of David to cause him to write these words?
 - b. When in your life have you felt most Godforsaken?

- c. Read Matthew 27:45-46. When Jesus cried out the words of Psalm 22:1 on the cross, do you think he really felt Godforsaken? Did God really forsake Jesus? Why or why not?
 - d. Other aspects of Psalm 22 also foreshadow what Jesus would eventually experience on the cross. What other statements in this psalm correspond to what Jesus experienced on the cross?
5. Read Psalm 23. As Alex lay on his hospital bed feeling the despair of Psalm 22, both his sister and a friend from his church began to read to him from Psalm 23. Alex said, "It's no coincidence that Psalm 23 comes right after Psalm 22. What God was telling me in that moment is that having faith does not eliminate the possibility of fear in our lives. And that often the times of our greatest fear can be the times when we feel closest to God. The times of greatest adversity can be the times where God works the greatest miracles."
- a. Do you agree? Can Psalm 23 faith coexist with Psalm 22 fear and despair?
 - b. Alex said, "Some of God's best work is done in times of total despair." Can you think of any biblical examples of God doing great work through an experience of total despair?
 - c. In your own life, have you experienced God doing great work through a time of great despair?
6. Alex showed us two scenes from the movie "Paradise Road." In the first scene, we saw a group of women being held in horrific conditions in a Japanese prison camp. Yet despite what they were facing, they formed a choir and sang beautiful sacred music to God.
- a. When you saw that film clip, what thoughts or feelings did it evoke?
 - b. Where do you think those women found the wherewithal to sing amidst such tragedy?
 - c. Can you see yourself doing the same? Why or why not?
7. When the nun who formed the choir was dying, she wanted Psalm 23 read to her. Why? What is it about Psalm 23 that brings such comfort?
8. In your life right now, what's happening that comes closest to evoking Psalm 22 despair? And what wisdom does Psalm 23 speak into that situation?

Join us at church at 7:00 pm on Good Friday as we remember Christ's death.

Children's Easter Egg Hunt at church on Saturday at 1:00 pm.

Easter Worship Celebrations at 9:30 and 11:00 am Sunday.