

Good morning, HORIZON'S Good morning. It's good to be with you this morning. In this time of worship, the spirit definitely is in the room. We are continuing on today in our sermon series, Anxious for Nothing. And today we're talking about fear.

Now, when I was preparing for this message, it reminded me of that game I used to play when I was little. Maybe you used to play it as well, or you'd have a flower and you'd pick off a petal and you'd say, He loves me.

And then you pick off another petal and he loves me. Not right, he loves me, he loves me not he loves me, he loves me now, so on. Well, as I was talking, preparing for this message today and talking about thinking about fear, it was like, okay, it was kind of the same thing.

It's like, okay, God wants us to fear. God wants us to fear not. God wants us to fear. God wants us to fear not like which one is it? So let's start with fear. Not now. This is an easy place to start.

We should not have fear. We should because of our faith. It's a great reminder of when the anxieties of life start to build up. And there are many, many scripture passages that could back this up, including Isaiah 41:10 Fear Not for I am with you, be not dismayed, for I am your God.

I will strengthen you. I will help you. I will uphold you with my righteous right hand in Timothy we find for God gave us a spirit not of fear, but of power and love and self-control. Another one from Isaiah 35, for I say to those who have an anxious heart, be strong, fear not behold, your God will come with vengeance, with complaints of God, He will come and save you. So it seems pretty simple that we should not have fear and we could easily leave the message at that. But there's this other side to it.

Now, some of you may have grown up in a church that used a fear based approach to religion, and maybe there was a lot of sermons with fire and brimstone, maybe pastors yelling that you better believe or you will be faced with eternal damnation.

Now, I guess this form of fear based preaching and of evangelism works for some, but this fear, fear based approach seems to seem to not last. In my opinion, the fear needs to either intensify or be reinforced somehow in order to have a lasting effect.

Now, the relationship part of being a follower of Christ is really difficult if you are fearful of a God who might do something to you if you mess up. Now, there is this well-known sermon by a preacher named Jonathan Edwards, and the sermon is titled This Will Give Away What the Sermon is All About.

The sermon is titled Sinners in the Hands of an Angry God. And Jonathan, use this imagery of us, of the sinner, as despicable as a spider dangling over the fire. And God is in control and can punish at any time.

So here's some of these words from this sermon. It says, The God that holds you over the pit of hell, much as one holds a spider or some loathsome insect over the fire, abhors you and is dreadfully provoked.

His wrath towards you burns like fire. He looks upon you as worthy of nothing else but to be cast into the fire. You are ten times, 10,000 times so abominable in his eyes as the most hateful and venomous serpent is in ours.

Now, if you can imagine, since this sermon that was preached in the 1970s, there has been controversy around this sermon. Now, some people love this sermon and base their messages around it and others. I'm certainly in the other camp.

I find it so hard to believe. I find it hard. I find it so far from the loving, grace filled God that sent Jesus as an example of love and service to die on that cross so that we might be free.

Those things just seem like they don't go together. Now some fears are put into place to keep us safe. Right. We have a natural reaction to things. We have this fear as a reaction to two dangers that we might face.

Or we have a fear we learn of, fear of walking out into the street without looking for four cars, because that is an important thing that we learn as we're growing up. So fear. Fear not fear.

Not fear. Where are we? So I would certainly rather live in the fear not camp all of the time. I'd rather teach our children that God loves them and that God is love. The word fear is in scripture over 300 times.

But it's not all fear not. And so I think if we focus only on the fear not, we might be missing something. So sometimes we fear everything that there is to fear except the one thing that we should fear.

Scripture tells us over and over again that we are to fear God. Leviticus 25:17. You shall not cheat one another, but you shall fear your God, for I am the Lord your God. Deuteronomy eight six. Therefore, keep the commandments of the Lord your God by walking in His ways and by fearing him.

So when we translate this word fear, sometimes translations will change it to revere. Right? Instead of fear, God revere God or respect God. I like to think about it as standing in awe of God, but so much more than that.

When we think about the our creator, right. It's really amazing when we stop and think about this world and this universe in all that it is. And the amazing those little amazing details that that that scientists tell tells us about, like if the Earth's tilt is just exactly the right and if it was off just a little bit, it wouldn't work. And that the gravitational pull by the moon, that's just the right size for the mass of the earth is just right. And then we have this sun, this bright star in the sky that's just close enough to warm.

But it's not too warm, although this week is questionable. And then you have galaxies. You have thousands of galaxies. Actually, they estimate between 100 and 200 billion galaxies out there. And we are just this tiny little speck in this great universe.

And even though, you know, we can travel to the other end of the world and that seems like a lifetime away, but it's nothing compared to what's out there and what God has created. So maybe you saw some images floating around social media recently, some images released from NASA there.

There's some really cool ones. This is one of them that was recently released. And it's it looks like mountains and valleys speckled with glittering stars. But this is actually the first time that we are able to see some invisible areas that were once invisible.

But now we can see them of star birth, which is really amazing. And then there's another picture that's pretty cool. And this one is just under 2300 light years from Earth. And these lines help kind of like fingerprints that the NASA website say they're kind of like fingerprints.

And they can tell us all sorts about particular atoms and molecules, which is pretty amazing. And then there's this other one. This one is a picture of several different galaxies, and this one is called the Cartwheel Galaxy, and it's located 500 million light years away, which is pretty darn incredible.

Now, on the NASA website, this picture is titled Stellar Gymnastics in a Car in the Cartwheel Galaxy. Now, speaking of stellar, I just want to let you know that we are just only 350 days until VBS 2023. And the theme for VBS 2023 is five four, three, two, one, four physical and two internal engines on opening main

door. I think. Wow. And his amazing look over there. Let's go. She says. Jesus. It. Now I decided I. I shine my light. Yes. Stellar. I am so excited to be able to share with the kids the wonder that is space and how we were created as stewards of God's great creation.

But sometimes we have to step back, and it's important for us to do that. It's important for the kids, important for us to step back and realize how small we are in the grand scheme of things. The world has been around for so long and we don't know how long.

The world will continue to be here when we are not. And the world does not revolve around me. The world does not revolve around you, right? God is so much bigger than we can even imagine. Now, the book of Job kind of helps us understand this, this magnitude of God, and it helps us understand, you know, God's place when we have anxieties in life and God remains enough in all circumstances, Job teaches us. And even when we can't comprehend it, God remains enough. Now, Job is a good man. But he suffers a lot in his lifetime.

And sometimes we suffer in our lifetime and we don't understand it. And so Job in this book is in his job, and his friends are trying to figure out, like, why Job is suffering so much. And they all give their speeches with reasons why.

And Job gives a speech, his defense of why he shouldn't be suffering. But near the end of the book of Job God answers. And it's a couple pages it's a couple chapters of God's answer, and they are almost all rhetorical questions.

Now, I use rhetorical questions sometimes, but it's usually to my family when I'm either being sarcastic or I'm trying to prove that I was right or I'm just annoyed with them right. I'll say things like, Do I look like the maid?

Or Do you think money grows on trees or are your legs broken? Right. But I want you to listen to some of what's found in the Book of Job. Now, this is God. God is answering Job in the whirlwind, and God says these things.

Were you there when I laid the foundation of the earth? Tell me if you have understanding who determines it. Do you determine its measurements? Surely you know or who stretched the line upon it? Or what were its basis sunk?

Or who laid its cornerstone? When the morning stars sang together and all the heavenly beings shouted for joy. Have you entered the springs of the sea or walked in the recesses of the deep? What is the way to the place where the lightning is dispensed?

Or the place where the east winds are scattered over the earth? And it goes on and on with these rhetorical questions of God is speaking these things to Job in the whirlwind of craziness of Job's life. And what God is trying to do is God is trying to get Job's attention by asking these rhetorical questions.

And sometimes I think the best and easiest way to stand in, in awe of God, is to think and fear what He is capable of. And sometimes it means to just simply pay attention. It's those moments when we're standing in the mountain range, right?

Or we're standing at the edge of the water and the ocean is in the distance. And those moments are a little bit easier, right, to feel God's presence in those big moments. But God tries to get our attention everywhere.

The greatest way to seek God is by simply paying attention. And sensing God's presence now in VBS this year, every day they ask the kids these God sightings, like, where have you seen God in the last day? And they answer things like, These are just some of the examples when praying and remembering and writing and art and dance. And they saw God in the rain and in the music. And they saw God in a tiny worm. And they saw God in everyone in the world, in wild flowers and birds and sunsets. And they saw God in mermaids.

Pretty cool. Now my to do list is pretty big write. Every day I have this to do list. I cross things off, I add things, I move things from the day before that I didn't finish right. And sometimes my to do list does not include thanking God.

And what happens when we lose sight of that? What happens when we lose the sight of God's power and love? Fear of God for the unbeliever means the judgment of God, an eternal separation from God. But for the believer fear.

Is the reverence of God. Hebrews 12 28-29 says this. Therefore, since we are receiving a kingdom that cannot be shaken, let us show gratitude by which we may offer to God and acceptable worship with reverence and are for indeed, our God is a consuming fire.

Now there is there is time to fear God. God is powerful. God is almighty. God is sovereign. And the fear is, is reverence and all. But it's so much more it's actually surrendering to the creator of the universe.

Now when we're able to pay attention, when things are going well, when we can pay attention to God, when things are going well, we will train ourselves to see God when things are not going well. Psalm 34 is a great song and it helps us to understand that others suffer.

And others experience anxiety and challenges in their life. And some of what Psalm 34 says this look to him and be radiant so your faces shall never be ashamed. This poor soul cried out and was heard by the Lord and was saved from every trouble.

The Angel of the Lord in camps around those who fear him and delivers them. Oh, taste and see that the Lord is good. Happy are those who take refuge in him. Oh, fear the Lord you his holy ones, for those who fear him, have no want.

Now here's where the real hope in fearing God comes. And it's found in the verse right before the passage that I just read. And it says, I sought the Lord and he answered me and he delivered me from all my fears.

So the question is, is can we equally live in fear of God while not living in fear because of God? And the answer, of course, is, is yes. Yes, of course we can do both. But first we have to taste and see.

As that song just said, we have to seek God. We have to experience God for ourselves in order to really understand both the power of God and the grace of God. If we surrender.