
HOW BIG IS YOUR GOD?

Winston Churchill, the prime minister of England during WWII, is perhaps best known for saying, "We have nothing to fear but fear itself."

- Yet, that was a very fearful time.
 - Nazi Germany was taking over Europe.
 - Bombing runs were happening on London regularly.
 - What would the future hold?

That's a question many of us may ask.

- What does the future hold?

The truth is that this is a question that has been asked throughout history,

- especially when the weeks and months ahead look bleak.

Surely Joseph was asking that question when his future seemed to be crumbling.

- He was engaged to be married, but now his wife-to-be was pregnant,
 - and it was not his child.

What should be his decisions about the future?

- He could preserve his reputation by making a public divorce of this woman,
 - though it would probably result in her being stoned to death.
- He could make a quiet divorce, though it would cost him financially.
 - Loss of an arranged dowery.
 - Cost of a house already begun to be built.
 - Possibly the cost of his good name and reputation.

Yet, in the midst of this uncertain, even fearful future, an angel appears and says, "Do not be afraid!"

- "Yeah, right," he must have thought. "Easy for you to say."

Do not be afraid.

- These are important words, but how we hear them has a lot to say about how big we believe our GOD is.

Today, we live in a world of uncertainty and fear.

- Is it safe to send our children to school?
- Do we have enough protection to move on from the pandemic?
- How secure is the future of our country, our planet?
- Even privately we have fears:
 - health, financial future, security, safety.

So many fears in our lives.

- Recently, I've read about a young man from Africa, a student who wonders if he can extend his VISA to stay here to study to be a medical doctor and to remain with his fiancée.
- And a woman who, eight months ago, was a medical researcher, but now lives in her car which she can barely keep running as she looks for work.
- And an out-of-work man whose brother found him a job in Baltimore, but who has no way to get there.

A world of fear and difficulties.

- And we all know that the four words most to be feared are, "We need to talk."
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But I wondered, do any of us fear losing the love of GOD?

- Could GOD ever reject me for what I've done?
 - Perhaps we become so wrapped up in our other fears that this question never surfaces.
 - Perhaps it is just too great a fear even to think about, especially since there is so little that we could do about it anyway.
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A friend of mine who is a pastor started a second church called Zach's Place.

- They don't meet in a church building; they meet in a home.
 - The people that come are those who have been told by the Christian church that they are not welcome.
 - My friend makes sure to tell them each week that GOD loves them unconditionally and that nothing can change that.
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For others, today, their belief is that all their problems wouldn't be happenings if GOD really did love them.

- Perhaps that what Joseph felt.
 - Yet into these fears came the word of GOD.
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"Do not be afraid!"

- This is the most common message spoken in the Bible.
 - In this season we hear it spoken to Joseph, to Mary, to Zechariah, to the shepherds.
 - Later we will hear it said at the calling of the fishermen, when JESUS comes walking on the water, at the Transfiguration, and even after the Resurrection.
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"Do not be afraid!"

- "How can GOD say that and expect it to mean anything to us?"
 - "If you want me not to be afraid, take away the reasons for my fear!"
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Fears, though, have their purpose, especially in GOD'S plan.

- Who do you turn to in the midst of fear?
- Who do you place your hope in when all seems lost?

This doesn't mean that GOD sends the things that cause us to fear.

- It does mean, however, that GOD walks beside us, or sits with us, when we do have those fears.
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A friend, John Angello, says that, "fear is allowing the enemy to enter in and shake your faith."

- Faith in GOD is what allows you to hear the words, "Do not be afraid."
 - Fear also serves the purpose of challenging us to ask, "How big is my GOD?"
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It may seem odd when we think about "Do not be afraid," that scripture also talks about "the fear of the LORD," especially in the Old Testament.

- Psalm 111:10, for example says, "The fear of the LORD is the beginning of wisdom."
 - This, however, is not the same kind of fear to which GOD says, "Do not be afraid."

Fear of the LORD has to do with realizing the greatness, the awesomeness, the...well...bigness of GOD.

- Sometimes when you ask children, "How big are you?" they will raise their hands to get as much stature as possible and say, "I'm sooo big."

Fear of the LORD has to do with recognizing that our GOD is sooo big.

- So big that the storms that threaten to capsize are stilled.
- So big that illness and disease are overcome.
- So big that those who cannot walk are given legs to leap.
- So big that those who cannot speak receive voices to sing.

Our GOD is so big that multitudes are fed with crumbs,

- so big that demons are cast out,
- so big that the dead are brought back to life.

Our GOD is so big that though all of humankind be guilty of sin and cannot overcome its consequences,

- that the death of just one MAN can erase all sin forever.

GOD can say to Joseph, "Do not be afraid!" because GOD knows that the baby Mary is carrying will save HIS people from their sins.

- GOD can say to Joseph, and to Mary, and to the shepherds, and to us, "Do not be afraid," because our GOD is so big that GOD sees the big picture of eternity.
 - GOD says, "Do not be afraid," because GOD knows that those who fear only the LORD will be with the LORD forever.

Do not be afraid of the things of this life for these things are small compared to eternity.

- Do not be afraid of the fears of this day for your GOD is so much bigger.

I like how Paul puts it in Romans 8:

- *If GOD is for us, who can be against us?*
- *Who shall separate us from the love of CHRIST?*
 - *Shall trouble or hardship or persecution or famine or nakedness or dangers or sword?*
 - *No, in all these things we are more than conquerors through HIM who loved us.*
- *For I am convinced that neither death nor life, neither angels nor demons, neither the present, nor the future, nor any powers,*
 - *neither height nor depth, nor anything else in all creation will be able to separate us from the love of GOD that is in CHRIST JESUS our LORD.*

Realize just how big is your GOD, because when you do, you can say with confidence, "I am not be afraid."