

Selah: Stop, Look, Listen – May 7, 2020

The Lord be with you.

Are you fearful about what is happening to us in this pandemic and quarantine? Fear is after all a natural reaction to things that threaten or safety or well-being and trying to just ignore fear doesn't help, not dealing with fear only makes things worse.

We might try to eat our way over it, drink our way over it, shop our way over it. And there will always be people to tell us, Hey, get over it. But I've learned if I do not own my fear if I do not face up to my fear, that fear has this strange way of going underground and actually gaining more power over me and that's one reason we're seeing a lot of depression, in these days of the pandemic because fear is masquerading as depression because psychologists tell us the depression can be fear that its mask that is denied that has gone into hiding.

Today, I'm looking at John Chapter 14, Verse 1, as Jesus is speaking on what was the most frightening the most horrific darkest night in human history, the night before his crucifixion, as all the forces of hell are running loose and they're in the upper room Jesus is talking to men who are afraid they're totally confused by what seems to them a world that is spinning out of control, and yet Jesus says, to them in John 14, 1. "Do not let your hearts be troubled, you believe in God, believe also in me. Now perhaps you've seen this verse on a plaque as this first makes for a great plaque to hang in your own.

But I tell you what I'd like to do, I would like to go into the business of making context plaques. I mean for every Bible verse, we put on a plaque that we also make a plaque that shows the context of that verse.

Because, you know, when doing Bible studies often times said that a text without a context becomes a pretext.

Now, Do you remember the context of John 14:1?

The context is that Jesus has just told His disciples that He's leaving them, and they're troubled he has just told them that one of them is going to betray Him and they're troubled even more, and then he tells them that Simon Peter is going to deny him not just one, not just twice, but three times minimum field to them as though Jesus, has completely pulled the rug out from under their feet.

That's all in the context of this verse. Now I'm going to read the text, John 14:1 with its context, I'm going to ignore the chapter division the beginning of Chapter 14. I'm going to read right over it because the chapter divisions were not put into our Bibles into the 16th century and sometimes they get in the way of our reading, they interrupt the flow of thought.

And so I'm gonna read it just as John records Jesus' words as he heard them beginning there, in John 13. Simon Peter said to Jesus, Lord, where are you going? Jesus answered,

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where I am going. You cannot follow me now but you will follow me afterwards. Peter said to Him, "Lord why cannot I follow you now I will lay down my life for you, Jesus answered. "Will you lay down your life for me? Very truly. I tell you before the cock crows, you will have denied me three times."Do not let your hearts be troubled, believe in God, believe also in me."

I love how Eugene Peterson and the message translates this verse, "Don't let this throw you, you trust in God, don't you? Trust me.

That is the calm assuring voice of the shepherd in the midst of all their troubles. It reminds me of a T-shirt, I saw recently with the words Relax, I've got this. God. But Jesus doesn't just stop there, with John 14:1. Let's follow on in the context. "Do not let your hearts be troubled, you believe in God, believe also in me, in my Father's house, there are many dwelling places.

If it were not so would I have told you that I go to prepare a place for you and if I go and prepare a place for you, I will come again and will take you to myself so that where I am, there you may be also.

Tell me where is Jesus right now? Jesus is with the Father, and Jesus through his life, death and resurrection, and ascension has prepared a place for you and me with the father.

That is our spiritual position right now that we are with the father, to be loved by the Father, as Jesus is loved by the Father, that we might be right where Jesus is. The Apostle Paul in Colossian 3:1 that We are raised with Christ, and seated with Christ at the right hand of the Father. That is the security of our position with Jesus that is the power of our position with Jesus that nothing can ever harm or sever our relationship with the Father.

Horacio Stafford was a successful Chicago lawyer and businessman who lost much of his business in the Great Chicago fire, of 1870, and then shortly after that great fire Safford lost his four daughters in a shipwreck, over the North Atlantic and sailing to England to be with his wife would survive the ship wreck.

Stafford, wrote these words of a hymn perhaps you know the hymn. When peace like a river attendeth my way, When sorrows like sea billows role, Whatever my lot, though hast taught me to say, It is well, it is well, with my Soul. As Jesus has gone to prepare a place for us with the Father that where he is with the Father we might be loved by the Father even as Jesus is loved. "Do not let your hearts be troubled. Don't let anything throw you.

I wanna share with you now a prayer that helps calm me, when I'm troubled when I'm afraid is called the Abba Prayer. It's simple but powerful. You sit, kneel, or lie in your bed for a few moments and you just let yourself relax into the Father's presence.

I like to take a few deep breaths to help me relax and become still before Abba father and then after taking a few moments to be still in Abba's presence you breathe in slowly saying the word Abba, and then you breathe out slowly saying, "I belong to you.

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Abba, I belong to you, Abba, I belong to you: breathing in, breathing out, Abba, I belong to you, repeat this prayer for a few moments breathing in, breathing out, Abba, I belong to you, on that darkest night of human history, Jesus said, "Do not let your hearts be troubled, you believe in God, believe also in me, trust me, I've got it.

I am Tim Smith. A fellow traveler in the pilgrim way, thanks for listening until next time...

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