

June 21, 2020 (3rd Sunday after Pentecost)
Psalm 86:1–10, Matthew 10:24–39
Reasons Not to Fear

INTRODUCTION

1 Businesses Anxious to Reopen, Worry about Surviving Pandemic (Natasha Pace, CTV news, May 7, 2020)



- As the COVID-19 pandemic continues, businesses are anxious to reopen, but they are also worried about whether they will survive once they do reopen.

- "That's my greatest fear," said Tim Rissesco, with the Downtown Dartmouth Business Commission. "We've done so well in Downtown Dartmouth in building an eclectic neighbourhood with all kinds of interesting shops.

- But they are mostly new -- a lot of the businesses are only two or three years old -- so they haven't had the opportunity to build war chests to ensure these kinds of downturns. So, I do worry that we're going to lose some of them."

2. Proclamation of the Gospel, Worry about Surviving Persecution

- The disciples of Christ were doing the business of God's Kingdom which was to save human beings.

- But they were mostly new – they had received only two or three years of training as disciples – so they may not have had the opportunity to build enough power to endure amid persecution.

- So, they worried that they were going to lose their faith in the face of suffering.

- In the face of persecution, Jesus gives three reasons not to fear for continuing God's kingdom business.

- **Theme: What are the reasons not to be fearful as we share the gospel in a troubled time?**



BODY

1. Reason #1: GOD WILL NOT PERMIT EVIL TO WIN

1.1. What if God Controlled Humans with Taser Guns? (J. P. Moreland & Tim Muehlhoff, *The God Conversation*, IVP Books, 2007)

- What if God took the radical step of setting a deadline for ridding the world of evil?

- Suppose God announces that next Monday at midnight he will step in and stop all suffering caused by evil people. How would he do that? Let's say God decides to use a tool carried by many police officers—a Taser gun.



- Start to tell a lie, and you are hit with a half-second zap. Try to rob a person, and you get two seconds of shock. A would-be murderer would be incapacitated.

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1.2. God will Bring Every Deed into Judgment



- Who were the evil people for the disciples?

- Evil people were those who would persecute the disciples from the city hall (civic arena).
- Evil people were those who would oppose them in the synagogues (religious arena).
- Evil people were those who would arrest them and put them on trial.

- Evil people love darkness because it hides their evil thoughts and deeds. They conspire in secret to defeat the good successfully.

- Jesus asks his followers not to fear evil people because God sees everything: every deed, every word, and every thought (Mt 10:26).

- Instead of fearing evil people, Jesus asks us to fear God and obey his commands, for God will judge us for everything we do, including every secret thing, whether good or bad (Ecclesiastes 12:13-14).

2. Reason #2: OUR ENEMIES HAVE THE LIMITED POWER.

2.1. Who Is Your Enemy? (Jay Younts, Shepherd Press, May 24, 2016)



- You may think you know exactly who your enemy is.
 - Your enemy is your unhappy spouse.
 - Your enemy is your stubborn teenager.
 - Your enemy is your ungrateful boss.
 - Your enemy is your friend who said something you don't like.
 - Your enemy is the economy or the job market.
 - Your enemy is your sickness.
- In short, you may think life is your enemy. You think you know who your enemy is.

• Christianity is about hand-to-hand combat. It is important that you identify exactly whom it is that you are fighting! You are likely to believe the enemy is the people and circumstances you encounter. When this happens, your energy is spent fighting the wrong target!

• You need God's wisdom to identify your actual enemy, otherwise you become like the fool in Proverbs who is clueless about why he is frustrated and struggling.

2.2. The Limited Power of Our Enemies

"Do not be afraid of those who kill the body but cannot kill the soul" (Mt 10:28, NIV).

• The second reason not to fear is that our enemies have limited power.

- Our enemies can hurt us economically.
- Our enemies can hurt us physically.
- Our enemies can hurt us mentally.
- The worst they can do is to destroy our body, but not our soul.

• Even Satan has limited power. Satan has the power to bruise our heel (a painful injury) (Ge 3:15). Satan may threaten us with a death penalty, but the danger that he poses is limited and temporary.

• A good remedy against it is to trust that only God has power over eternity.



3 Reason #3: GOD CARES FOR US.

3.1. The Pests We Need (Andrew Shaughnessy, "Indispensable Pests," ByFaithOnline.com (11-20-19))

• In 1958, the public health authorities in China called for the elimination of disease-carrying rats and flies, malaria-ridden mosquitoes, and sparrows, which ate grain seed and fruit.



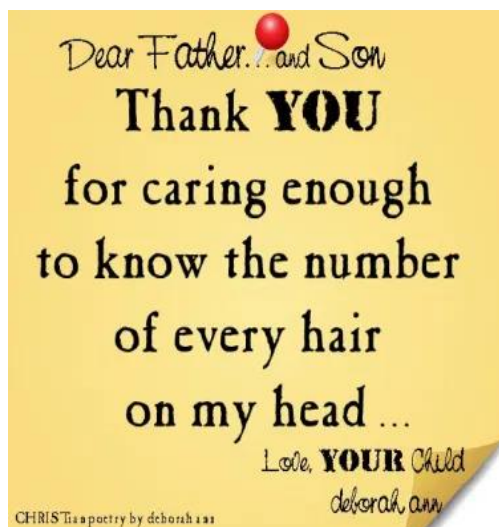
- The people shot sparrows from the sky by the thousands and destroyed their nests.
- Children would bang pots and pans at sparrows resting in trees, chasing them until the little birds plummeted from the heavens.
- Within a year, the sparrow population in China had been pushed nearly to extinction.

• At first, it seemed as though the plan had worked. But the problem was, sparrows not only eat grain and fruit but also eat many kinds of insects, including locusts.

- With their natural predator gone, the locust population skyrocketed, and hordes of grasshoppers swept through the countryside, devouring everything in their path and contributing significantly to the Great Chinese Famine.
- By 1961, tens of millions of Chinese peasants would be dead — starved to death by a tragic convergence of economic mismanagement and ecological imbalance.

3.2. Inside God's Care

"Are not two sparrows sold for a penny? Yet not one of them will fall to the ground outside your Father's care" (Mt 10:29, NIV).



- Even the sparrow is inside of God's care.
 - Sparrows in this verse are a symbol of little value.
 - If the Father cares about a sparrow, will he not much more care for humans, and especially for Jesus' disciples!
- God knows us better than we know ourselves.

"And even the very hairs of your head are all numbered" (Mt 10:30, NIV).

 - We don't know how many hairs we have on our head, but God knows.
 - The God who knows us well will take care of us.

- Do no fear because our Father who values and knows us so well cares for us.
“So don’t be afraid; you are worth more than many sparrows” (Mt 10:31, NIV).

CONCLUSION

- Perhaps we are afraid of what people might think of us when we share the gospel.
- The reasons not to fear while sharing the gospel are...
 - God will not permit evil to win
 - Our enemies have limited power
 - Our Father cares for us.

(Psalm 86:7-8, NIV)

*7 When I am in distress, I call to you
because you answer me.*

*8 Among the gods there is none like you, Lord;
no deeds can compare with yours.*

PRAYER

Heavenly Father, we are living in a dangerous world with war, depression, persecution, racism, COVID-19 etc.

And we are afraid of how to share the Good News amid the danger.

We learned that Jesus was sending his disciples into dangerous situations.

When the disciples were in distress, Jesus gave reasons not to fear while sharing the gospel.

Jesus assured them that God, who cared even about the sparrow and who knew even the number of hairs on their heads, cared for them.

As a follower of Jesus, we believe the same is true for all of us.

Let us trust your promise that nothing can separate us from the Father’s love.

Let us boldly share your care and love even amid frightening things such as COVID-19 that are happening to us now.

We pray in your mercy and care. Amen.