

Harris Creek Baptist Church
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Series: Awe
June 11, 2023

How to Replace the Fear of Man with the Fear of God
Matthew 10:26 - 34

²⁶ “So do not be afraid of them, for there is nothing concealed that will not be disclosed, or hidden that will not be made known. ²⁷ What I tell you in the dark, speak in the daylight; what is whispered in your ear, proclaim from the roofs. ²⁸ Do not be afraid of those who kill the body but cannot kill the soul. Rather, be afraid of the One who can destroy both soul and body in hell. ²⁹ Are not two sparrows sold for a penny? Yet not one of them will fall to the ground outside your Father’s care. ³⁰ And even the very hairs of your head are all numbered. ³¹ So don’t be afraid; you are worth more than many sparrows.

³² “Whoever acknowledges me before others, I will also acknowledge before my Father in heaven. ³³ But whoever disowns me before others, I will disown before my Father in heaven.”

(JP walks out with a 7-foot python around his neck to strong reactions of surprise from the audience.) Well, if you’re a guest with us today, it’s the second Sunday of the month, and this is what we call our “Snake Service”. (This statement brings much laughter and chuckling around the room.) So, we’re glad you are here. No, this is Esmerelda, and I’m going to hand her off to my friend, Nathan. Can you guys thank Nathan for lending us his pet? (Audience claps.) Thank you for not eating me, Esmerelda.

Anybody afraid of snakes? Like you’re kind of freaked out right now? Kathy Davidson crawled up on top of her chair in the first service. I was like, it’s up here (pointing to his neck); it’s not down there (pointing to the room). I was afraid of snakes. I grew up on a farm. I was told the only good snake is a ... (audience finishes the phrase with “dead snake”). That’s right. I grew up under that mentality. They’re all dangerous. It’s interesting. Let’s talk about this for a second. What happened was that we would see snakes, and I would try to say what they were. I was like the know-it-all. “That’s a water moccasin.” “That’s a copperhead.” My friend that knows snakes says, “No, that’s actually a plain-bellied water snake. They’re harmless.” “No, that’s hognose.” I was always wrong, because I thought every snake is a dangerous snake. They’re all venomous. They’re all going to hurt you. You see something on the patio, you burn the house down, you sell it, you do whatever. That is how I was taught. A lot of you were taught the same.

Here's the truth. Let me just share some truth with you. 105 species of snakes in Texas. There are only four kinds that are venomous in Texas: you have a cottonmouth, a copperhead, a coral snake, and a rattlesnake. 85% of the snakes that you come in contact with are absolutely harmless to you. In fact, some of them are dangerous to snakes. For example, if you’re having a conversation on your patio and there’s a king snake in the corner, and you see it, there’s not a chance that you’re like, “Oh, look at that cute little snake in the corner. So, how have you been this weekend?” You’re like, “Oh! Ahhhh!” (JP jumps away.) “We’ve gotta do something! Get

the shovel! Get the shovel! It's a snake!" This is the mindset that we've had for so long. Now, here's the truth: you're actually safer with that king snake there in the corner. King snakes eat copperheads and venomous snakes. That's what they do. That's why they're the "king". (JP makes air quotes.) Rat snakes eat rodents. I know that I'm not, in just a few seconds, going to convince you to love snakes. I get it.

What I do want to convince you of, I just want to apply some logic. We have been taught this fear. There's something about where we've been raised and what we know, that if something can quite literally cause me no danger whatsoever, and that's true. For example, there was a coachwhip at our house one time and I put it on Instagram. People responded like, "Nope!" "Burn the house down!" "Sell it, put it on the market!" "Change zip codes!" Those were the comments that I got. That coachwhip can do virtually nothing to me. It cannot harm me. A kitten could cause me more harm than that. So, is my fear rational? You're still like, "I was raised, I was taught. I don't care! It's a snake, it's bad!" If we have to apply any logic to that, we're going to have to come out with a conclusion of "no". My fear is not rational.

How do you overcome irrational fear? How did I get over my fear of snakes? I educated myself. I began to learn things. I began to look at statistics. How many people die in the United States of America from snakebites? How common are they? I've been thinking if you see a snake, it's going to come after you. Is that true? Have you ever heard the story of the snake that chased that person down? Where does this ideology come from? Well, Jesus, the One that we follow, He's going to talk to us this morning from his Word, and He's going to say, "Hey, there's these things that you fear that you shouldn't fear. You've been taught to fear, and I'm telling you, as sovereign God, who created every person you've ever seen, sovereign over Creation, you fear this in error. And there actually is something that you *should* fear." The thing that He's going to tell us *not* to fear is something that all of us, I went with snakes because that's something that the vast majority of people are afraid of, or sense some sort of fear of. There's something that we all fear even more than snakes, and that's people. We live for the approval of others. We care what they think of us. And we're afraid of what they can do to us. This is what Jesus is going to teach us. This is my subject today: A wrong fear of man keeps us from a right fear of God. When I say "man" there, I mean in the generic sense, like humanity, mankind. A wrong fear of people keeps us from a right fear of God.

We're in this series called "Awe", and we said in Week 1, we attach this idea of 'awe' to 'fear'. We said that at some point in history 'awe' stopped meaning 'fear'. We said: "in awe of the beautiful sunset," "in awe of the vast ocean," "in awe of the Grand Canyon." We thought, "No," as we look back at that word, it's always included the idea of trembling, which is different than just appreciating the beauty, the power, and the might of something. There are these 300 commands in Scripture that you and I are to fear God. And so, if we don't fear God, it is very possible that our relationship with Him is different than what Jesus expects that it should be. Today, Jesus is going to send out His disciples, and He has this kind of last charge for this locker room conversation. He's going to tell them to do something, and we need to give it careful consideration. Week 2, Myles said, "Hey, these are three things that mark someone who fears God. These are three characteristics that mark the person who stands in the fear, or the awe, of God." Last week, my friend Luke Lezon said, "Hey, these are three things that will keep you from the fear of God. If you fall into these three categories, you're going to be kept from the fear of God."

I want to wrap up this series today talking about how a wrong fear of people keeps us from a right fear of God. The vast majority of us struggle with fearing people more than God. That's a heavy statement, and you have to personalize it and wrestle with it. Is it true? "Do I," and when I say "I", I mean "you", "struggle with fearing people more than God?" Because, if you do, that has tremendous implications for how you live. If we need to change that, then I pray that the Holy Spirit will change that today.

So, how would we know? Are there things that I change or do because of what someone might think of me? We talked about, Week 1, this idea of looking over your shoulder. (JP mimics scrolling on a phone.) You're scrolling through something; you see something that you shouldn't look at. Rather than fleeing from it, you say, "HmMMM." (JP looks over both shoulders.) "Anybody looking?" That action right there, is the anti-faith. It's the antithesis of faith, and it is evidence, you're proving the idea that you fear people more than God. You're not thinking, "Well, God, I know that *You* see me. I know that *You* know all things, but I don't care. I just don't want *them* to see me." (JP gestures over his shoulder.) This idea of hiding something, keeping it a secret, hoping someone doesn't find out; it's the idea of fearing people more than God. The Scripture says that one day everything is going to be laid bare. One day everybody's going to know, and that's one of the reasons we practice confession. Let's get this show on the road. I don't want to keep secrets to myself. I don't want to have something that just *I* know. If God knows, why do I care who else knows? Then we could talk about this. What about sharing our faith? We read in the Bible, repeatedly, "Oh, I'm supposed to share the Gospel." We think, "Why don't I share the Gospel? Well, because I'm afraid of what they're going to think of me. Are they going to think I'm weird? Are they going to think I'm heavy-handed? Are they going to put me in some group that I don't want to be associated with? Are they going to classify me as a person, misunderstand me? I really don't want to be misunderstood." All of this, is fearing people more than God. We have to wrestle with that with this really clear command in the Scripture, because every single time what Jesus is going to tell us, is that when you fear people, it's been misplaced energy, misplaced effort, misplaced head space. You don't need to do it.

Listen to this quote from Oswald Chambers. This is great; it goes right with where we've been. "The remarkable thing about God is that when you fear God, you fear nothing else, whereas if you do not fear God, you fear everything else." Let me give it to you again. "The remarkable thing about God is that when you fear God, you fear nothing else, whereas if you do not fear God, you fear everything else." The way that I got over my fear of snakes, is I educated myself to understand what I actually need to be afraid of. And Jesus is saying, "Hey, the way that you get over your fear of people, is you need to educate yourself to know and understand at a heart level what you actually need to be afraid of."

I'm going to be in Matthew, Chapter 10. It's the beginning of the New Testament. Turn to the back of your Bible. It's the first gospel in the New Testament. It's the first book, just turn 10 chapters in and move toward then end of the chapter. I'm going to start around Verse 26. As we move through this, we're going to talk about three simple points today:

- How it is wrong to fear people
- How it is right to fear God
- How we are to share God with people

What's happening, in the context of Matthew, Chapter 10, is Jesus hasn't been crucified, He hasn't resurrected yet, but He gathers his twelve. Up until this point, He's been speaking in code called Parables. He's been speaking in a way so that everyone wouldn't understand. And even when He heals someone, He says, "Hey, don't tell anybody. Keep it a secret." Which is confusing, and that's because His hour and time has not yet come. He has to begin the work of the Gospel through these different areas, strategically, before they're going to realize that He's claiming to be God and crucify Him. But now, this is a turning point. He gathers His twelve, and He says, "The things that I've told you in secret, I want you to declare from the rooftops. I want you to tell everyone, and I'm sending you out. You don't need to take a lot of stuff because people are going to take care of you, but they're also going to hate you, and they're going to be hostile to you. I'm sending you like sheep among wolves, so be ready. Buckle up! And get ready to tell the Truth, regardless of what happens to you." What a word for us. I do think we have to wrestle with, "Hey, that's cool. He told them. Is that for me, too? Is Jesus telling *me* that? Is that kind of central to how I'm to live my life?"

Verse 26, let's go! **"So do not be afraid of them, for there is nothing concealed that will not be disclosed, or hidden that will not be made known. ²⁷ What I tell you in the dark, speak in the daylight; what is whispered in your ear, proclaim from the roofs. ²⁸ Do not be afraid of those who kill the body but cannot kill the soul."** Speaking of kill the body, I'm clearly sick. My voice is hanging on by a thread. If you're listening to this later on, I'm sipping Throat Coat hot tea up here, so you might hear that. This body is a broken vessel. He says, "Don't be afraid of them. Who's the "them"? He's saying, in context, those hostile to Christianity. There are only two kinds of people in the world. There are those who have the Holy Spirit, whose lives are producing the fruit of the Spirit: love, joy, peace, patience, kindness, goodness, gentleness, faithfulness, and self-control. Then, there's the "them". "Them" are those who don't know God, who are still children of the Enemy, who are hostile to the message of the Gospel. Here's what that means; only two kinds of people. There are those *on* your team, supportive of the mission of Jesus Christ, and then there are those who are *hostile* to the mission of Jesus Christ. He's saying, "You don't need to be afraid of these guys (indicating the first group), because they're on your team. They're going to support you, cheer you on, encourage you toward the mission. These guys over here (indicating the second group), you don't need to be afraid of them, because what can they really do to you? What can they really do to you?" There's a blank there that you're probably starting to fill in. "They can do *this*, and they can do *this*, and they can do *this*, and they can do *this* ..." His point is, whatever they're going to do, they're not going to do it long. If your whole life is just a life of suffering and persecution, then you get a reward forever and ever and ever and ever and ever and ever. You have to live with that eternal mindset. It's the only way to remain on mission for Jesus Christ. He's saying this, in context, not to the Gentiles, not to the pagans, but He's saying, "I'm sending you guys to the lost sheep of Israel, to the Jewish people, the very people who are going to kill Me. And I'm telling you, you do not need to be afraid of them." Can you imagine?

He says that everything that is concealed ~ **"So do not be afraid of them, for there is nothing concealed that will not be disclosed, or hidden that will not be made known. ²⁷ What I tell you in the dark, speak in the daylight; what is whispered in your ear, proclaim from the roofs. ²⁸ Do not be afraid of those who kill the body but cannot kill the soul."** He says, "Everything is going to be made known." This is what this means. He's saying, "When you're talking to somebody who's opposed to your message, they're going to know you were right, so

you can share with them that confidence. You're going to walk out of the room and all of a sudden somebody's going to come in and say, 'Oh, yeah, they were absolutely right. You were wrong. Here's the reality. Here's the truth about God, here's Heaven.'" Could you imagine being one of the people who crucified one of the apostles, the twelve that were sent out? Or crucified Jesus? Maybe you lifted the hammer and banged the nails, and all of a sudden you get to the Afterlife, you get to Eternity, and you go, "Oh, man! They were right! Man, we shouldn't have boiled John alive! We shouldn't have thrown James from the temple. They were right! When they said that man came back to life, they were right! They were speaking the truth!" That's what's going to happen. Every knee is going to bow. Every tongue is going to confess. Everybody is going to know the truth! He says, "What I told you, I now want you to tell everyone." The worst thing that people can do is send you to Glory. Really, the worst thing they could do to you is give you your Reward, expedite your Reward. What can they really do to you?

My first point is this idea that it's wrong to fear people. A really simple idea straight from the text:

1. *It is Wrong to Fear People*

In fact, the Scriptures, the Bible, often juxtapose the idea of the fear of people with the fear of God, saying that if you have the fear of God, you don't have the fear of people. If you have the fear of people, you don't have the fear of God.

One of my favorite verses that I refer to often, is Galatians, Chapter 1, Verse 10: "**Am I now trying to win the approval of human beings, or of God? Or am I trying to please people? If I were still trying to please people, I would not be a servant of Christ.**" The Scriptures, the Holy Spirit, through the Bible, gives you this binary option. You are either living for people's approval, or you're a servant of Jesus. If you're a servant of Jesus, you're not living for people's approval. And if you're living for people's approval, you're not a servant of Jesus. Period. End of story. That's it. Nothing else to add to that Truth.

What's crazy about this text, in Matthew, Chapter 10, Peter's there. Jesus says, "Hey, listen, you don't need to fear them. Don't you dare disown me in the presence of them." That's where we're headed. "You acknowledge me." Peter's there. Peter's hearing this, first-hand, from Jesus's vocal cords, and he leaves there. Peter was there when He walked on water, he saw the healings, he experienced all the stuff. When Jesus gets arrested, he cuts off the guy's ear. And then Peter's warming himself by the fire, and they say, "Oh, you're one of His boys!" "No, I'm not!" "Yeah, you are. I saw you with the Galilean!" "I'm telling you, I'm *not*!" 12-year-old girl, "Actually, that is one of His guys." "Listen! I'm telling you! (expletive) I'm *not* who you're saying I am!" Cock-a-doodle-doo. He denied Jesus three times. He lived in stark contradiction to the commands of Christ right here, and he heard it with his own ears. He said, "This is what I'm going to do."

I think this is one of the big reasons we don't share the Gospel. We don't want to look weird. We don't want to be rejected; we want to get invited to the party. It's like when you were in high school, if you remember high school, or you have a child in high school. The lunchroom, or the cafeteria, you walk in there and you've got the cool kids, you've got the FFA kids, you've got the emo kids, you've got the athletes, you've got the student council. Everybody's got their table,

their clique they hang out with, and your greatest desire as a high school student is you just want to fit in, you want to have a place, you want to be liked. That's what's ultimate. "I want them to like me, to think much of me." The reality is, you grow up from that and for some of us, it never goes away. "I still want to be in the cool mom's group! If I'm talking about Jesus all the time, they're going to drop me off the GroupMe." "I don't want my children to be ostracized." "Listen, I don't want to be that weird family that's always about Jesus, because then who's going to want to come hang out with my kids? I'm living vicariously through them!" "If I'm talking about Jesus at work all the time, I'm not going to get the promotion. I'm going to get passed up. Listen, my boss is not a believer. They don't share my values. I've got to be a little bit more covert." And we live in the fear of people rather than the fear of God.

All of us understand fear, whether it's snakes or spiders or ... And some fears are irrational, and you see it. You see it in kids. One of my kids went through this phase. My son went through this phase where he was afraid to be by himself. I don't know what mental narrative was stirred up – monsters, ghosts, goblins. I don't know. But I'd say, "Hey, bud, go take a shower." "Dad, could you come with me?" "Like in the shower?" "Well, no, Dad. We're out of soap. Can you help me carry the soap?" He was always making excuses. "Dad, will you just come with me? Hey, Dad, I can't find my shoes. Will you look in my closet and see if they're there? Oh, they're not there? Well, maybe they're under my bed. Will you look under the bed?" He was always trying to make sure the place was safe. I said, "Weston, this is irrational. I just went upstairs. I checked all the rooms. I'm going to be right here. I can hear you." But you can't talk somebody out of fear. It's really difficult to, right? Nothing I said changed his fear, and at some point, it's offensive. "Hey, I'm right here. You know I know jiu jitsu. What's up, dude? I've got guns. What are we afraid of? C'mon, man!" There's no talking him out of it. He said, "Hey, I'm afraid! I'm afraid!" And I can't be like, "Well, don't be afraid!" You see how it's irrational in a child, but it never feels irrational when you're in it. Some of you, right now, are sitting in an irrational fear of man. You're afraid of people. You are living as a slave to what they think of you, which is contrary to what the Scripture teaches; which is, if you fear people, you don't fear God. And if you fear God, you don't fear people.

That's why He says "rather" back in the text. "²⁸ ... **Rather**, ("Don't fear them! They can just destroy the body. *Rather*, here's what I want you to fear." Jesus, when He was on the earth, this is what He said.) "²⁸ ... **Rather, be afraid of the One who can destroy both soul and body in hell.**" He said, "Don't be afraid of someone who can only impact your earthly body. God can give you a new body. He's sovereign, even over a soul." I think you've got to read that and say, "Does that fit in our theology?" Jesus, at this really pinnacle moment in history is sending these guys, and saying, "Guys, listen. You don't need to fear people, but you do need to fear God." Does that fit our theology? You can wrestle with it all day long. This isn't the only place He says it. Remember in Matthew 5, He says, "Don't lust. Gouge out your eye, cut off your hand. It's better to enter the Kingdom of Heaven without a hand or an eye than to have your whole body dragged away to Hell." I don't know that our theology fits that kind of Jesus preaching. The One we follow, we're Christians, we're "little" Christs, we're Jesus followers. I don't know that that's the Jesus we've been following. The one that said, "Be careful, man, you don't want to go to Hell." Fear of God. Fear of God will keep you out of Hell.

Then He says, **“²⁹ Are not two sparrows sold for a penny? Yet not one of them will fall to the ground outside your Father’s care. ³⁰ And even the very hairs of your head are all numbered. ³¹ So don’t be afraid; you are worth more than many sparrows.”** Sparrows were the cheapest birds sold in the market. They were as prevalent as pigeons here. That’s how we can think of them. They were sold for food. If you’re eating sparrows, you’re in a tough spot, because they were the cheapest food you could buy. The cheapest denomination of currency was similar to our penny, the lowest denomination. So, He’s saying, “Hey, you can get two sparrows for a penny, and your Father cares about *them*. How much more does He care about *you*, who was created in His image?” You were made in the image of God. If He cares about this virtually worthless bird, how much more value does He put on you, who He created to rule over the birds, and over the snakes, and over Creation? It’s a lot of value. And He’s saying not a single one of these worthless birds hits the ground outside of God’s care. How much more does He care about you?

My second point is

2. *It is Right to Fear God*

It is wrong to fear people, it’s right to fear God; a simple idea straight from the text. We said that the fear of God is actually the fear of being separated from Him. If we believe, and realize, that Hell is eternal separation from God, then it rings true with this text that Jesus is giving us right here. He’s saying, “Hey, you don’t want to be separated from Him. You need to fear the eternal separation from the Father.” This is something you should live soberly with, but you’re like, “Wait a minute. I shouldn’t fear that because I’ve trusted in Christ. There was this event. I did the altar call. I said the prayer. I asked Jesus into my heart.” We’re going to reconcile that in just a minute. I want to come back to that idea because I think that’s very important, and I’m going to come back there. But if you understand fear at all, you understand the fear of God. Just imagine how fear works – the fear of anything. You fear things that can hurt you, things that are creepy. You know what it is, if we could boil this down, dialogue this a lot? I think we’d come down to we fear things we can’t control. Now you have a God, a deity, who is in control of all the things you can’t control, so you can understand, your fear of anything is actually a fear of Him. If you believe that He is in control of all the things you can’t control, and I’m telling you He is. Not a sparrow hits the ground apart from His care. Or your Scripture might say His will.

So, do we fear Him? I don’t know. We did this series because I don’t know. Myles taught that one of the things that marks the people who actually fear God is they tremble. We probably all heard that sermon and said, “Man, he did a good job, that young man! The Vertical guy, wow! That was a great message!” Anybody tremble? (JP raises his hand looking for others to join him.) Did anybody leave there and say, “Hey, we’d better tremble! I don’t know if I know how to tremble.” Anybody been thinking about that? Anybody? (JP raises hand again and looks for others.) I just want to raise my hand and say, “Hey, I’m not sure we get it yet, and that concerns me, as a church, especially as somebody who’s going to be held accountable. You’ve got a pastor up here; this is Consumerism Christianity at its finest. You’ve got a pastor up here saying, “Do you know what it means to fear God? You tremble before Him.” And we leave saying, “Yeah, that was good. I’m glad we went today. I’m glad we didn’t stay home because I got something out of it.” Guys, I’m telling you, we’re missing it by a great chasm. We learned a false idea of church somewhere along the way. There has to be an undoing, a relearning, something

else that we would leave here and live by faith because, in fact, faith and the fear of God are synonymous. To know God and to believe in Him is to understand a healthy fear of Him because of who He is: His power, His might, His strength, His sovereignty. And it has to be balanced with this idea that He cares for you more than anything. He cares for you more than the sparrows. He puts a great value on your life. You can talk to any real estate agent. Who determines the value of a property? (JP listens to responses from the audience.) The market, somebody in the first service said appraiser. If we say appraiser, and the appraiser says, "It's worth this," and we put it on the market for *this* and it just sits there, and no one buys it, who determines the value of the property? The buyer. The purchaser. God said, "Here's what you're worth: My only Son, Jesus Christ. I will give Him up for you. That's what you mean to Me. I will allow My only Son to suffer, torturous death, and die for you. That's what you mean to me." What happens through that transaction is you have been adopted; that was the price He paid for your adoption, that you can call Him Father. He's your Dad. Whoa!

Imagine you work at a company, and there's a co-worker that has just made it really difficult for you. They don't like you. They've gossiped about you, they ignore your feedback, they take any credibility you have, they discredit you. You don't really even enjoy going to work. You know you're going to see them, and they've just rude to you all the time. And you're thinking, "Man, what should I do about this situation? Here I am, I've got this co-worker, this peer, who just doesn't like me." Now, imagine your dad owns the company. Doesn't the narrative change a little bit? One day, it's like, "Oh, no! What's going to happen?" And the next day, it's like, "Who cares what they think of me? They work for my dad. They actually work for somebody who works for somebody who works for somebody who works for my dad. Who cares?" God is sovereign over every person who hates you. He's in charge of your reputation. The king's heart is like water courses in His hand; He directs them wherever He pleases, the Scripture says. This is what Jesus is saying. "Why do you fear them when this One over here is actually in control of them? They can't do anything to you, apart from His will." Which messes with their head a little bit, because what happens on this side of persecution is we begin to blame God. You can't do that! You've over indexed on an idea, on a theology. The world is broken, things are not as they should be, God is fixing the world. He's creating the world into what it should be, but under the sun there is suffering. And when we suffer, we don't blame God, we move *to* Him, who is the only remedy of the suffering that we experience. That's of paramount importance when we're talking about this idea.

Verse 32: ³² **"Whoever acknowledges me before others, I will also acknowledge before my Father in heaven. ³³ But whoever disowns me before others, I will disown before my Father in heaven."** Man, those are some cold words, Jesus. I always read this text and probably, like most of you, thought, "Great, so just don't disown Jesus." Like somebody says, "Hey, are you a Christian?" (JP struts while responding.) You just kind of stick your chest out, chin up, and say, "Yea, I am a Christian. Wassup?" If you go to some closed country to Christianity, they put the knife to your neck, "Deny Jesus!" "No SIR! Not gonna happen!" (JP thumps his chest.) "I'm a Jesus follower! Do with me as you please! Yeah! Let's go!" There's another verb there. There's another verb there. *Acknowledge*. Whoever *acknowledges* me. This is the offense of that defense. One is reactive. "Oh, yeah. In that spot, somebody asks me, I'm gonna tell them!" But then there's this other, proactive. "Oh, I'm to tell them? Regardless if they ask or not?" That's the whole context of this passage. Jesus is saying, "Hey, go declare from the rooftops what I told you in your quiet time. So go and acknowledge me. Go share this truth."

My third and final point is when we understand the fear of God, we

3 *Share God with People*

We are to share God with people. We don't fear God because we fear man. And you think, "No, I don't fear God because I became a Christian and I said the prayer for salvation." Let's just wrestle with that for a minute, because I think that's where a lot of us are. We say, "I don't fear God because I'm saved. I got my 'fire insurance'. I got my 'card'." Let's just talk about it for a second.

There are two places: there's Heaven, there's Hell. All souls are going to be in one of those two places. And God, in His kindness, put someone in your life who shared the Gospel; you said a prayer, you trusted in Christ. "Now I'm saved, and so now I'm navigating this world until He calls me Home. I'm living in this world. I'm working in this world. I'm dating in this world, getting married in this world, having children in this world. And I believe, I literally, quite literally believe, that every soul, and I know, I love God, I love people, the Great Commandment, and every soul that I see is going to be in one of two of those two destinations for Eternity. And I have been so blessed, so fortunate to be saved, but I'm going to come in contact with them and I'm *not* going to share the Truth of how *they* can be saved because of what they might think of me. But I really believe it!" And I'm just saying, "Man, are you sure?"

Here's the deal, and you can wrestle with this. Some of you might say, "Dude, I'm *out* on that church! They're like really heavy-handed." And if you do, don't stop wrestling with this idea. "Is it possible for me to believe that and keep it to me? Or does that idea completely and totally and utterly contradict the entire message of this book?" I'm going with 'B'. I think that it does. I've banked my life; I've bet my life on the fact that it does. And one of my greatest insecurities this morning is that you'd be like, "Man, he's so heavy-handed. It's like hellfire and brimstone at Harris Creek today." This is what I think I'm doing. I think I am taking the words of Jesus and diluting them just a little bit. Softening them a little bit so that you can hear them, and putting them in front of you. These are the words of Jesus, the One we serve. The Holy Spirit, captured this, wrote it down through a person, preserved for thousands of years so that we would read it today and apply it to our lives. They're His words, not mine. I'm just explaining the context of what He said. These are crazy ideas, right? There are two things that mark a Christian, in really general terms. One, they live like a Christian, the fruit of the Spirit. They're known by the fruit of the Spirit: love marks them, joy marks them, peace marks them. They care for others. They're compassionate. They do what Jesus would do, they don't watch what Jesus wouldn't have watched, they don't talk how Jesus wouldn't have them talk, they say words that bring life, they spend how Jesus would have them spend, and save how Jesus would have them save, and give how Jesus would have them give, and host how Jesus would have them host. They follow Jesus. That's a Christian. They follow Jesus and they share about Him with others. They tell others about Him. You've got a lot of people who do *this* (indicating his first point), but won't tell anyone. Then you've got people who will do *this* (indicating his second point), but they don't live like *this* (indicating the first group), so they're really bad PR for Jesus. What the Scripture is calling you to do is do both of those. That those would work together. That you would live as a Christian, and you tell others *why* you live as a Christian.

Peter denied Jesus to a 12-year-old girl, because he was afraid. He was afraid of what they were going to do to him. But something happened. He was emboldened by the Holy Spirit, and he goes on to be the first pastor of the Church. He goes on to give the first sermon *in* the Church. He goes on to be this church planter, and one of the greatest missionaries the world has ever seen. What happened? This is the first sermon Peter preached. Let me just read, these are his sermon notes. I'm going to read them to you. It comes from Acts 3. Jews are there. These people, they want to kill him. This is what he says to them. The same guy that denied Jesus to a 12-year-old girl. What happened? Watch this. **"Fellow Israelites ... ¹³The God of Abraham, Isaac and Jacob, the God of our fathers, has glorified his servant Jesus. You handed him over to be killed, and you disowned him before Pilate, though he had decided to let him go. ¹⁴You disowned the Holy and Righteous One and asked that a murderer be released to you. ¹⁵You killed the author of life, but God raised him from the dead. We are witnesses of this. ¹⁶By faith in the name of Jesus, this man whom you see and know was made strong. It is Jesus' name and the faith that comes through him that has completely healed him, as you can all see. ¹⁹Repent, then, and turn to God, so that your sins may be wiped out, that times of refreshing may come from the Lord, ²⁰and that he may send the Messiah..."** What happened? That's a different dude! That's a different guy! That gives us hope, because maybe you're sitting there saying, "Oh, no! I've disowned Jesus. I have not acknowledged Him." There's hope for you. (JP indicates his Bible.) Greatest pastor, first pastor, Church built on his declaration of who the Messiah is in Matthew 16, one of the greatest missionaries, evangelists the world has ever known. What happened? My prayer is that's what would happen today at Harris Creek. I just believe God is that big. What if He does that in our hearts, and takes the coward of Peter and turns us into the courageous Peter, gives us the courage of Peter. By the way, they're like, "Peter, if you don't shut up. If you don't keep your mouth shut, we're going to kill you. We're going to crucify you. You like Jesus? We'll kill you just like Jesus." He says, "Turn me upside down. I'm not worthy to die like He did." And he preached his last sermon nailed to two pieces of wood upside down. What happened? Something happened. Something happened. He started to fear God more than people.

This series is called 'Awe'. I want to close by tying it back to that word. We all get 'awe'. Awe of God is easier for us than the fear of God. Everybody has experienced awe. Can you think of the last time you saw something, and you said, "Wow! That is amazing! That's beautiful! That really takes your breath away!" Can you think of something? Maybe, just hypothetically speaking, even on the way to church this morning. You get close to church and you see something and say, "Wow! That is really pretty!" Can anybody think of something? The sunflowers. Man, so pretty. It's like, "Whoa! Wow! (JP pretends to text on a phone.) Man have you seen the sunflowers? Look, here's a picture." (JP continues to pretend to text.) Life group text, "Man, did you see the sunflowers?" You know, Harris Creek shot a video of it and put it on social media. It was shared hundreds of times, because people share when they experience awe. Here's a quick video just in case you've been sleeping. (Video shows the huge sunflower field beside Harris Creek taken by a drone.) That looks fake. That looks like some stock footage somewhere else in some other country. That's actually our church there in the background. We filmed that. Those are our sunflowers, which is awesome.

When you experience awe, you share it. You just always do; you always have. So, if you're at this place where, "I don't really share about God. It's not a normal part of my life." No, no, no.

I'm not going to say, (JP uses a coach's loud voice.) "You've just gotta do it! Just be courageous!" No, no, no. Stop that. Go back to being in awe of Him. Maybe you never have. Get to this place where you're amazed by who He is and what He's done for you.

In summary,

- 1 *It is Wrong to Fear People*
- 2 *It is Right to Fear God.* If we believe this,
- 3 *We Should Share God with People*

Do you know why sunflowers are called sunflowers? "Because they look like the sun. Duh!" They look just like a sun. Turns out, these things follow the sun. Everywhere the sun goes, the face of them goes. It's pretty amazing. I thought, "What a picture of the awe of God that as we live our life, we're constantly thinking about Him. In every conversation, every purchase, every move, we're just constantly aware of what God is doing. We're fixated on Him. Do you know why they do that? I assumed it was to get something from the sun they needed for life. No. They do it, this is crazy, they follow the sun because it makes their face warm, and attracts bees for cross-pollination so that they can replicate themselves. Duplicate themselves. It's crazy, so they can multiply themselves. So, the reason that the sunflower keeps its face toward the sun is so that it can be multiplied. That's it! That's the awe of God. That we would remain just dedicated in this place, just watching God all the time, aware of what He's doing, and then we multiply ourselves if we multiply our faith in others. We're just amazed by Him and we just talk about it. "Dude, He's so amazing! He made this weed, beautiful, and it follows the sun. It's crazy!" That's the awe of God. That's what we would do. As I thought about that, I thought, "How do they do that? With no brain, no central nervous system, how does this plant know to follow the sun?" I look at that snake we started with. That thing is terrifying and *beautiful*. Look at the artistry of where He put the scales and the designs on this creature. How amazing is He? And just fall in love with Him all over again. With trembling. With trembling. That's the awe of God. Tell someone about it. Let me pray that we would.

Father, help us tell someone about it. Would you just stir in us an amazement for you? Would you just stir in us an amazement for you? You're a good God. The best! The best that ever has been and the best that ever will be. You called us to know You. Would you help us to share the hope that we've received with others who do not have it? Because we're amazed by You. Because we're in love with You. Because of who You are. Even as we worship You, Lord, would You just do a new work in Harris Creek today? The same Spirit that emboldened Peter, would you put that same Spirit in our hearts that we wouldn't operate in fear any longer? We'd be free from fear. That we would operate out of the amazement that we have for You. In Jesus' name. Amen.