

Do Not Fear

by Erlo Stegen

The sermon encourages believers to overcome fear by trusting in God's sovereign will and submitting to His plans for their lives.

Duration: 1:01:52

Scripture: Deuteronomy 31:6, Psalm 23:1, Proverbs 3:5-6, Isaiah 41:10, Matthew 1:20-21, Matthew 6:34, Luke 1:30-35, Romans 8:28, Philippians 4:6-7

Topics: "Overcoming Fear", "Trusting God"

Description

This sermon focuses on the theme of overcoming fear and trusting in God's will, using the biblical story of Mary and Joseph as examples. It emphasizes the importance of submitting to God's plan even in difficult circumstances, highlighting how God can turn challenges into blessings when we trust Him. The sermon encourages listeners to let go of fear, humble themselves, and seek God's will, ultimately leading to a life of victory and spiritual growth.

Transcript

Verse 30, do not be afraid Mary, you have found favour with God. You will be with child and give birth to a son and you are to give him the name Jesus. You will be with child and give birth to a son and you are to give him the name Jesus.

For he will be great and be called the son of the most high. The Lord God will give him the throne of his father David. And he will reign over the house of Jacob forever, his kingdom will never end.

How will this be Mary asked the angel, since I am a virgin. The angel answered, the Holy Spirit will come upon you and the power of the most high will overshadow you. So the Holy One to be born will be called the Son of God.

So we'll end there. Now Gabriel was sent by God to Mary with this message and she was very young because it was the custom in Israel at the time that Jewish girls would marry very young. Some say she might have been 15 or 16 years of age.

The angel said to Mary, do not fear. Fear is a strange thing. And it started way back.

Fear. Abraham too was afraid one day. Some in the West say well Abraham lied because Abraham said that his wife Sarah was actually his sister.

But it is the truth that she was indeed his sister. Abraham was using wisdom which Christians in the West they don't understand. Jacob too was fearful of his brother Esau.

Moses was afraid of Pharaoh. The disciples when in their boat and a terrible storm arose they too were afraid. And until today it is the same situation.

People are still ruled by fear. Even though it is Christmas time yet fear reigns. At the very time when there should be joy and happiness because they should be focused on Christ alone.

Fear brings about many big things in this world. Just look at the many whites who have fled from South Africa because of fear. They say we don't know what future will be here for South Africa.

Jesus said do not worry about the future. Today's worries are enough of their own so do not be anxious about tomorrow. We become afraid of anything.

And yet Jesus commanded do not fear. We have too many thoughts that we are thinking about. And sometimes the fears and the thoughts that we have never come into fulfillment anyway.

Satan is thrilled. He finds a weapon when he sees us afraid. And even lions they are helped when they see that there is confusion because of fear.

If they are targeting a crawl full of cattle and they have no way of entering into the crawl they start surrounding the cattle crawl. They look, they feel where the wind is coming from and so they will stand in the wind. If it is coming from the east they will be in that direction that it blows over.

And some of the lions will stand in the place where the wind is coming from and they break wind as well. So the smell of the lions drifts over the cattle in the crawl and they become terrorized with fear and they'll even break through their own protection to get away from the lions. A famous preacher named John McNeill from Scotland was troubled by fear a lot especially when he was small on the way to school.

He had to pass through a valley in which there was a big dark forest and it was rumored about that there were criminals in the forest who robbed people and take their money. Whenever he would pass through the forest he felt terror that perhaps the criminals will get hold of him. Sometimes he had to pass that way at night and he was even more fearful.

One night it was pitch black and he walked very carefully on the path through the forest. Then he heard something and he thought this is it. These are the criminals out to steal my money.

And as he walked very carefully thinking they are about to pounce upon him he even thought he heard a voice and he said this is my end the criminals are going to get hold of me. Then a second voice was crying out. Then he heard a voice saying John is it you? Then John recognized the voice being of his father who had come to meet him.

Just look he was paralysed by fear thinking that it was the worst case scenario and yet it was his own father coming to meet him calling his name. It was the voice of the father and that same voice brought peace and consolation to the heart that was so fearful. There is the one who has the authority to rid us of our fears.

There is the true father the one who is able to rid us of all our anxieties. There is a word in the Bible just one verse which rids us of that fear. Three times God sent an angel to announce the coming birth of his

son.

But when the angel came in all these cases great fear came upon those who heard it. But that messenger that voice had come with a message of peace. So three times the angel came with this wonderful message.

Then each time the angel said do not fear. Then the angel would share what God had said the angel should say. We need to learn this.

Not to fear for fear is an evil thing. I once heard a doctor say that a person who is always fearful that they are about to get cancer it is very bad for them for they can get real cancer. So some say that the fear of cancer is worse than the cancer.

Do not be afraid. The message that God had given to the angel this mighty angel not to fear. We should not be afraid.

You will find a person very afraid of the future and whether they can survive forgetting that God is fully able to provide for our needs. So instead of being fearful we should trust God. God is able to care for us.

He is able to protect us always. He is able to sovereignly engineer circumstances at all times because he is God. Therefore we should trust him.

He who is above all circumstances. He is able to protect us in any circumstance. We should trust him for that.

We should not be afraid. We should not fear. We should not be afraid.

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No other woman was to have such a privilege and achieve such honour and fame. Nevertheless, on the other hand, there was danger. You interpreted that, Begwingo? Yes.

It was dangerous. For in that era, for a girl to be found pregnant outside of marriage was the death sentence to be stoned. It was the worst disgrace that an unmarried girl should give birth to a child.

It was despised. It smelled terrible. And it is difficult when things and circumstances don't go according to the way we expect.

And things that we had not predicted. But God does allow circumstances to come our way when we just do not comprehend or understand why it should be so. But God allows it because he wants to help us.

He wants us to mature spiritually and that we should know him in a more intimate way. And if these things come our way, it is very easy to start questioning. And one says, but Lord, why is this thing happening to me? Is this your judgment on me? It is easy to then become critical even of the Lord himself.

And yet, through these circumstances, he is lifting us up, giving us a more noble Christian life and knowing him and that the Lord allows this to happen. And the Lord does not hide from us because he says that we as his followers should take up our cross daily. And in taking up the cross, it means that we are denying ourselves.

We are denying ourselves. This is the era of human rights. And a person says, but this is my right.

Or a husband will say, but it's my right. But I am the boss in this home. But if we walk with the Lord, we bend to his will.

Whether it's nice, pleasant, or not nice, because we bow to him. To grow in him. That we would know him in a more intimate way.

It's so easy when circumstances come upon us to start questioning and being critical. And we think things are no longer on track. It's easy to have questions.

But if we just humble ourselves, bow before the Lord's will, the Lord will in due time lift us up spiritually. If we allow God's way, that is a nobler way, a nobler way. We cannot, as Christians, avoid the way of the cross, carrying our cross.

Matthew, it says, that the life of a Christian is not easy, but the end thereof, after the testing and carrying, we will experience a better life. That is the secret, that we live a life of victory, learned to trust, trusting the Lord. And her work situation was very difficult, she was overloaded with work. But she was always radiant with glory, was a triumphant believer.

One day, a wealthy lady with a gloomy outlook, her face was always long, came to her and said, you are happy now, but with earning such a meagre salary, what will your future be? Nancy said, hold on, stop. I don't think that I will meet up with what you predict, for the Lord is my shepherd, I shall not want. And it's all the supposes that you are making, that make you so miserable, that if you have your good shepherd, you will never want.

Some people are prepared to sacrifice anything just for a bigger paycheck, but they lose out spiritually. But Nancy was able to trust the Lord as her shepherd, that she would never want in the future. Let's have a closer look at Mary's life, despite this disgrace that was to come upon her.

That was on her path, even though she was to be so humiliated. Mary was fully prepared to submit to the Lord, to submit to His will, for she wanted God's will in heaven to be done in her life on earth. We so glibly pray, Thy will be done on earth as it is in heaven.

Just think, if God's will was truly done on earth as it is in heaven, it would be heaven on earth. So with Mary, despite the shame, the disgrace, the danger, she was prepared to fully submit her life to the Lord, that in her life, God's will would be done. So with Mary, despite the shame, the disgrace, the danger, she was prepared to fully submit her life to the Lord, that in her life, God's will would be done.

Mary is a fantastic example to us, even though she was just a 16 year old, she is an example to us who are 60 or 80. For she is an example, she teaches us to listen to the Lord, to humble ourselves, even if it is difficult. We who are Christians, Christians anywhere in this world, let us all learn from Mary.

It would be to go well with us, if we would only humble ourselves, allowing God's will to be done in all circumstances that we meet up with. For God will never bring evil across our path, he doesn't, he doesn't, he doesn't. It would go well with us if we would trust him because he never brings evil across our path. No bad luck happens to a Christian.

We should therefore be appreciative of the fact that we can live in the palm of his hand. With him things never go wrong, if we are in him we will meet up with glory, even if it looks like it is bad. So in our lives, therefore let us submit to him in faith, believing that all circumstances work for good, to the glory of our God.

Joseph was much loved by his father. He had a special place in his father's heart. He was one who was privileged in his family, but God allowed that he should be sold over.

So Joseph was then sold by his very own brothers. And he was to land up in jail for thirteen years. But after those years, how did it turn out? God exalted him, lifted him up to the most exalted place.

And he reigned, he was ruler. And even with Potiphar he ruled over him. It was difficult for Joseph, it was painful for him.

And now the Joseph of this New Testament, he together with Mary, among the Jews. Now I am speaking of Mary's Joseph, not the one in Egypt. Joseph was about to get married to this pure girl, this Mary who had never been touched by a man.

A righteous girl. She was straight, upright, without blemish. Everything went well, they got betrothed or engaged, they were about to get married.

And then this circumstance came across his path which just floored him. He saw it as a very hard circumstance that his betrothed should be pregnant, knowing that he was not the father of this pregnancy. His dreams went wild.

All his dreams and his hopes were broken. All his joy was, it vanished. Joseph was faced with two decisions, one of two.

The first decision was just to divorce her, get rid of her in secret. Or secondly, to do it openly and publicly, to divorce her, exposing the shame, great humiliation, in the eyes of the whole community. And that second choice would have resulted in her death, for we hear that in Deuteronomy chapter 24.

Suddenly Joseph's life was upside down, because he had heard that his wife-to-be, his betrothed, was pregnant. I think many of us would have simply thrown in the towel and given up all hope. But God had already arranged everything, and he did what was completely different to the cultural norms of the day.

And even what they had thought about, finding himself under the curse of sin. And yet, Joseph was a righteous man, he didn't speak to anybody about it, he was silent. He was able to hold his tongue.

The problem is, why we sin so much is that we speak too much, although it's the sin of women in particular, but men are becoming just the same. And it was a privilege for Joseph that it was not to be his end and his destruction. For when Joseph was still pondering upon the circumstance, God sent his angel Gabriel to announce the matter, that you Joseph, you are chosen among all the men of the whole world, for you will have the Messiah.

You will bring him up as a child, you will even train him and teach him. No person was ever privileged like this man Joseph. God looked among all the men available and then chose Joseph.

He was the one through whom God could work. He was going to be the father, or like a father, of our Saviour. Sometimes, God's ways cost a lot, total sacrifice, but the end result of that is far more rewarding than the cost.

We will have to one day say, Lord, forgive me that I ever had critical thoughts of your ways and that I was trying to go against your will. But if you allow God to work in your life, then it will be wonderful to be in his family, that Joseph would be the one who would bring him up. If you allow God to work in your life, then it will be wonderful to be in his family, However, should you go against God's plan for you, things will turn out bad.

It was Joseph's inheritance, or his part, that which he was given. Even the priorities of Joseph's life, that he made it the priority to obey what God had said. Even though there was disappointment, even though he was to be laughed at, humiliated, For him, God's will was to be number one in his life.

Joseph allowed the will of God to be done in his life. Don't be afraid of the very thing that God has appointed for you. You might at the beginning of it see it as something bad.

But finally it will be something wonderful, full of blessing. Don't pay too much attention to the things that come across your path. Just seek God's will and do what he says, that which he expects of you.

And then, above all things, his name will be glorified. Now I'm closing there, stopping there. I've really only preached half of my sermon.

But Christmas sermons are not at an end yet. I think we can maybe have another look at this matter later. Do not fear.

Let God's will be done in your life, as it is done in heaven. Then things will end well for you. Even if they might seem difficult, hard, allow God's will.

Humble yourself. Submit to his will. Like Mary, like Joseph.

Shall we pray? Let's stand to our feet and pray. Thank you, Lord, that we can receive your word and that it is written for us in your word all these wonderful secrets. That we might learn from them and that they are lessons to us.

That we would learn to walk with you so that your will would be done in our lives as it is done in heaven.
That the remainder of our lives would be good and not end badly. Help us, Lord, in that by your grace.

Amen.

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