



COLLEGE HEIGHTS
BAPTIST CHURCH

FEAR FACTORS

Part II

Daily Scripture Readings for
May 11 - May 31

FEAR: WEEK 5 - FINANCES

Monday, May 11 - Luke 12:13-21

One way to describe this parable is “it is better to be a poor farmer than a rich fool.” The man in the parable had a good dilemma. The production of his crops exceeded his ability to store the crops. So what did the man do? He spent valuable time in his life focusing on building a bigger barn to store his crops. In a grand reversal of fortune, on the night he finishes and prepares to rest on his laurels, he dies. He spent his life focusing on the wrong god: material wealth (possessions and money). When we read the next section tomorrow, we will learn what the man should have done with his excess yield.

Instead of focusing on building his fortune, the rich fool should have focused on God. The telling of this parable was brought about because a man asked Jesus to settle a family financial dispute. Jesus would not entertain the question because he sensed the man was asking because of greed. We must all guard our hearts from greed. Greed becomes selfishness, and selfishness leads us to build bigger barns for “our stuff.” It’s better to be a poor godly man (or woman) than a rich godless fool.

This week, we will be reading passages and finances and fear. Fear of our financial future can cause us great stress in life. It can make us be like the man who saves and saves and saves, so that one day we are comfortable. We see where that left him. Let the passage today serve as a warning to us all: put first things first. And like all of the other weeks on Fear, we must come back to one conclusion: trust God and nothing else. Do you trust God to take care of you financially? Or is it a constant stress in your life? Pray for God to give you the strength to let go of your finances and trust in God.

Tuesday, May 12 - Luke 12:22-34

A couple of days before I wrote this devotion, the kids and I noticed a bird nest in the tree in the front yard. A mama (we assume) bird was in the nest sitting on her egg. As I think about it now, it was a beautiful picture of God providing for his creation. Jesus tells similar stories about the worries of animals in our verses today. You are probably very familiar with this passage as it is seen in Matthew during Jesus' Sermon on the Mount. Luke's account of Jesus' words immediately follows the parable we read yesterday. If God provides for the birds to build nests, won't he provide for you as well?

Jesus finishes his point in verses 33-34 by telling us what the rich fool from yesterday should have done. While the rich fool was focused on greed and spending all of his goods on himself, we should have been providing for others. He should have been selling his possessions and giving money to those who need it. Jesus tells us that what we spend our time focusing on shows us what is of true importance.

What about you? Do you trust that God is giving you the kingdom? Where is your treasure? How much do you worry about paying the bills or your stock portfolio? Is your treasure in the bank or is it on God? A word of warning here: you don't have to be wealthy to make money your god. It's not about the numbers in the bank account, but the importance you place on the numbers or lack of numbers in your accounts. What is truly important to you? Where does your treasure lie? Pray for God to give you guidance on how you can better trust Him and if you have possessions and finances in their proper perspective.

Wednesday, May 13 - 2 Samuel 5

It is in 2 Samuel 5 that David finally becomes the king over the entire nation of Israel. With no other alternative, the northern tribes finally turn to David. He establishes Jerusalem as his capital and builds a palace there. It is clear that God is with David and this is allowing him to grow in power. When the Philistines came to attack, David

sought the Lord on what to do. A great example is he for us today and seeking God in our actions. Join us tonight on Facebook at 6:30 to discuss this chapter in more detail.

Thursday, May 14 - Mark 12:38-44

Have you ever read these stories together? I try to remind myself when I am reading a passage of Scripture to put it in context. I think verses 38-40 are very important for us to read in connection with the story of widow's offering in verses 41-44. I believe that Jesus simultaneously commended the widow for her faithfulness and condemned the religious leaders for exploiting her.

This widow is the type of person the Temple should be helping, not expecting her to give her last mites. This should not be a passage that is used to compel the poor to give more to the church, but a word of caution to the church to not be like the scribes who guilt the poor into giving more.

With that said, the widow puts her complete trust in God. She gives and Jesus commends her. She is a great example for trusting God, even if she shouldn't have been put in that position. She gave as an act of worship. The others in the story gave as an expense. If I were to ask you how you give your offering, is it a time of worship? Or is it just another bill? Do you give as the widow gave or do you contribute from abundance?

Friday, May 15 - 1 Kings 17:1-6

While we are over here worried about money, Elijah is getting room service delivered by ravens. When you read stories like these, how can you not trust that God will provide for you? Elijah knew that he was gonna have to trust in God after he delivered his message to Ahab. Elijah was faithful to his God (Elijah's name means My God is Yahweh) and his God took care of him.

I think that is a good short message for all of us when it comes to finances. Be faithful to God, and God will take care of you. Don't think for one moment that this means God is going to make you rich. God's provisions might be ravens bringing you dinner or manna from heaven, but God will provide. Thank God for the provisions he has given you in your life.

Saturday, May 16 - 1 Timothy 6:3-10

How is your relationship with money? Are you satisfied with what God has provided for you? Or do you always concern yourself with getting more? According to our passage today, our goal is to have a mixture of godliness with contentment. A false teaching that was circulating within the church was that godliness was a means to financial success. Instead, Paul writes to Timothy to remind him and the congregation that there is great gain with God, but it is not financial in nature. God's Kingdom doesn't put an emphasis on earthly riches. Instead, the Kingdom of God promotes simplicity and contentment. Do you find value in life or in the numbers in the bank? When we seek first money, we lose sight of what is really important. Instead, be content with what God has given you and focus on living a godly life.

Sunday, May 17 - Psalm 44:23-26

Thank you Lord for rising to our help. Let us worship that Lord this morning.

FEAR: WEEK 6 - HAVE NO FEAR. PRAY

*Our Father in Heaven,
Great is your name,
Your Kingdom come,
Your will be done,
On earth, as it is in heaven.
Give us this day our daily bread,
And forgive us our debts,
As we forgive our debtors,
And lead us not into temptation,
But deliver us from the evil one.*

Matthew 6:9-13

Monday, May 18 - Matthew 6:9

Throughout this week, we will focus on the Lord's Prayer. I would encourage you to recite the Lord's Prayer every day this week. Something you could also do is read it in different translations of the Bible every day. Doing this might give you a new perspective on these ancient words from Jesus. Something to understand about the Lord's Prayer is that it is not the only way to pray. Jesus showed us other ways to pray throughout his ministry as well (John 17, Jesus praying in the garden, comes to mind). The Lord's Prayer gives us an example to follow, not a mathematical formula to get exactly right. It's why some call this the Model Prayer. This is an example of how to pray against the previous verses which explain how not to pray (see Matthew 6:5-8).

Today, we will focus on verse 9: addressing God. When Jesus addresses God in heaven, he addresses him as Father. This was a common address of God in the first century for Jews and Christians alike, as it is today. This familial language that Jesus uses throughout the Gospels is what leads the Apostles to use that language in the rest of the New Testament, and it leads us to continue to use that language in the

church today. A father is not one who is distant, but active in the lives of his children. Later on, in the Sermon on the Mount, it is the Father who knows how to give good gifts to his children (Matthew 7:11). In Luke, it is the Father who looks to the horizon waiting for his lost son to return (Luke 15:11-32).

It is with this understanding of the father that we recognize how great God is. His name is great and worthy to be praised. He is our father who deserves to be set apart and unique in our eyes. There is nothing that compares to him in all of the earth. Thank God today that he allows you to call him Abba, Father. Write down 5 ways he has been great to you in your life. Walk through today remembering that God is truly great.

Tuesday, May 19 - Matthew 6:10

As a reminder, I would encourage you to read all of the Model Prayer every day this week, but today we will focus on verse 10. What does it mean to request that the Kingdom of God comes to earth?

Before we get to that question, something interesting in Matthew's Gospel that is different from the other three gospels is Matthew regularly uses the term Kingdom of Heaven instead of Kingdom of God. They are certainly synonyms, so why the difference? It reflects the audience to which Matthew was originally writing. Matthew's audience was predominantly Jewish, more than the other gospels. The term "God" was so revered that it would have distracted from Matthew's main point about the Kingdom of God, so he chose to use Kingdom of Heaven instead.

What does it mean to request as the Lord's Prayer does? It means heaven coming down to earth. It means the uniting of heaven and earth in a similar way that we see the perfection of the Garden of Eden at the beginning of creation or the picture of the New Jerusalem in Revelation 21. The rebellion of sin that has permeated the earth will be no longer as the Lord's will is realized throughout the earth. *Your Kingdom come, Your Will be done.*

Pray without reservation for this today. We desperately need God's Kingdom to be seen on this earth. We need his will to be done. God is king in heaven. He is worshipped continually in heaven. Let it be our prayer that the earth follows suit, and there is a reawakening to God on this earth as it always has been in heaven.

Wednesday, May 20 - 2 Samuel 6-7

Our main focus tonight will be the story of David bringing the Ark of the Covenant to Jerusalem. There are several truths we can learn about God and how we act toward God in 2 Samuel 6. Among other items, we will discuss if it is fair for Uzzah to die when he was just trying to keep the Ark from falling on the ground. What does this event say about God and our relationship with God? From our story tonight, we will also recognize the tension between beauty and danger when it comes to being in the presence of God. I hope you will take the time to think through that tension today, and I look forward to being with you on Facebook tonight.

Thursday, May 21 - Matthew 6:11

Give us this day our daily bread. With this simple phrase, I believe that Jesus had two meanings in mind. The first is spiritual bread. In the Gospel of John, it is written that Jesus is the bread of life (John 6:35). Our relationship with God through Jesus is the only thing we need to nourish our spiritual lives and it is the only way to fully nourish our soul. Too often, people try to fill spirituality with lots of different actions. In Jesus' day, the people would go to this temple and that temple to appease multiple gods. They would go through several actions to appease the correct combination of gods, so that their life would be full. What we need for spiritual sustenance is God, *Our Father in heaven.*

The second meaning in this phrase and probably the one Jesus was asserting more than spirituality is literal bread. We shouldn't forget that the majority of the crowd

listening to Jesus would have been poor people who Jesus lived among. Praying this prayer reminds all of us that it is God who will supply our needs and we “need not worry about tomorrow.” For millions of Christians around the world, this is an important literal prayer to them. They do not have a pantry full of food for today or tomorrow. They are praying for the work which will give them the money to buy food. They are praying for God to awaken another follower of Jesus to help them with food for this day. For forty years, God sent daily bread (manna) to Israel while they were in the desert. God will continue to provide daily bread for all of us. Thank God today for the spiritual and physical food he has provided for you. Pray for others so that they have the spiritual and physical sustenance they need as well.

Friday, May 22 - Matthew 6:12

A point to make about the Lord’s Prayer is that Jesus spoke it in Aramaic. This is significant because Aramaic was the common language of the people while Hebrew was the formal language spoken in the Temple. Prayers were usually recited in Hebrew. Why is this important? It shows us that Jesus wanted prayer to be spoken in everyday language. It tells us that when we pray there doesn’t have to be a specific order with formal words. It is a conversation with *Our Father in heaven*.

How do we know for certain that Jesus spoke this prayer in Aramaic when Matthew was written in Greek? It’s because of this verse. When Jesus asks for forgiveness for debts instead of sins, this vocabulary would have only been possible in Aramaic. Hebrew does not have this type of terminology.

I think it is best to use debts/debtors instead of trespasses/trespassers, but I don’t think that wording is something to get hung up on. Looking to the main point of this passage is that *all have sinned and fallen short of the glory of God* (Romans 3:23). We all must approach God and ask for forgiveness of sin. With that being said, once

you approach God and ask for forgiveness, God tells us that forgiveness is guaranteed.

Because of that guarantee of forgiveness, it is important that we forgive others for far less than the grievances we have inflicted upon God. The parable in Matthew 18:21-35 is a great illustration of this principle. Because we have been forgiven of a great debt, we must be willing to forgive others who have a relatively small debt toward us.

Immediately after the Lord's Prayer (Matthew 6:14-15), Jesus makes it even more clear that those who aren't prepared to forgive others will not be forgiven by God. Is this a situation of God withholding salvation to those who ask? Certainly not! Instead, this is a diagnosis of the heart of the one who will not forgive. If you are unwilling to forgive others of the wrongs they have committed toward you, then you are not ready to accept the forgiveness God is ready to give you. Essentially, if you are not ready to extend grace, your heart cannot comprehend that God will extend grace to you. If you are not prepared to give forgiveness, you are unable to believe that you can receive forgiveness.

Today, visit the spiritual cardiologist. Is your heart healthy and forgiving? Or is it clogged with malice and resentment toward others? Do you need to pray for God to clean out your heart so that you can forgive others? God's forgiveness is unconditional. Are you prepared to give that type of forgiveness to others as well?

Saturday, May 23 - Matthew 6:13

We conclude our readings on the Lord's Prayer with the last verse which has been the most peculiar and concerning statements in the Lord's Prayer. Is it possible that God would lead us into temptation? Must we pray that he doesn't, so that it won't occur? In Psalm 26:2, David prays for God to test him, so that he can prove he is able

to withstand temptation and be a man of God. That may have not been the best prayer to pray because David spectacularly failed when Bathsheba entered his eyesight.

The ending of the Model Prayer is the opposite. It is a statement that “the Spirit is willing, but the flesh is weak” (Matthew 26:41). Protect us from temptation God because I know what I am supposed to do, but I am afraid that I won’t be able to do it. Let us not take temptation lightly and ask for it, so we can prove ourselves. Instead we pray, *lead us not into temptation, but deliver us from the evil one.*

Sunday, May 24 - Psalm 46:1-3

Though the earth may change, God is our strength and will always be with us. Let us worship that God today!

FEAR: WEEK 7 - STORIES OF FAITH IN FEAR

Monday, May 25 - Exodus 3:1-10; 4:13

What fears and excuses have you used to not do what God was asking you to do? Moses tried every excuse he could think of to get out of the task God was trying to give him. He finally just said “get someone else.” Can you imagine? The God of the universe has chosen Moses for a specific task to change the world and Moses basically said no. Yeah, we can imagine. How many times have we said no to God? We have a nudge to go talk to someone; we make an excuse not to. We have an inclination to serve in a particular ministry; we talk ourselves out of it. We feel an odd desire to do something completely out of our normal; we just say “no.”

Exodus 4:13 gets to the heart of our excuses for not doing what God asks of us. Moses tells God all of the reasons he would be a poor leader, and God is patient, slow to anger, and answers all of Moses’ concerns. When Moses is out of excuses, he finally comes out with it: “get someone else.” And even when God’s anger burns

toward Moses, God obliges and gives Moses an assistant, his brother Aaron. (in the realm of be careful what you ask for, notice what happens with Aaron as Moses' helper, see Exodus 32). God has called Moses to this task and will remove every obstacle Moses thinks is in his way.

When God calls you to a task, he knows that you will be successful in that task (success can have lots of different definitions). God is going to be with you and remove the obstacles you think are in the way. What has God put on your heart to do in service to the Kingdom of God? Do not be afraid. God is with you.

Tuesday, May 26 - Jeremiah 1:4-10

I was in 8th grade and an organization I was part of was volunteering one Saturday morning at a kids festival in our local park. It was a rainy day, so there really weren't many people who came, so we got to watch the magic show when it was time. The magician needed a volunteer. I can't stand being picked for things like this. I'm naturally shy and really don't want to be the center of attention, especially if I don't choose to be the center of attention. I tried to not get picked. The magician decided it would be funny to pick the kid who didn't want to be picked (I don't ever pick someone to help me if they clearly don't want to). So I went to the front and was used as an assistant in a fake guillotine type magic trick. Make the audience think I was getting my head chopped off. I assume now I was in no real danger, but I was terrified and that was on top of not liking "being on stage." Everything went alright and I didn't die. I never said I was afraid, but my actions said everything for me. My friends later said they could clearly see I was afraid and didn't want to be there.

Similar to Moses' call by God that we read yesterday, Jeremiah is being called by God in our passage today. I want us to focus on verses 6-8. Do you notice anything peculiar? Jeremiah gives two excuses why he cannot be a prophet. God gives three reassurances. Jeremiah says he is young and cannot speak well. God says don't worry

about being young, I will tell you what to speak, and do not be afraid. Jeremiah never mentions being afraid. Nevertheless, God knows Jeremiah's heart and comforts Jeremiah's fears.

You don't have to act in front of God. God knows the real reason you do not want to do what he is asking. He can see it on your face and in your heart, just like everyone could see my fear on that Saturday morning in 8th grade. What are you afraid of? For Jeremiah, he was afraid of "them." This could have been other nations, or it could have been the social, political, or religious elite who he would speak out against. In your case, God knows that you are afraid and God is saying "do not be afraid of them." Who is "them?" In your context, you know the "thems" you are fearful of. God knows the "thems" too, and he will be with you to deliver you. You don't have to be afraid. God is with you.

Wednesday, May 27 - 2 Samuel 11-12

When David messed up, he *really* messed up. I have heard it said and I have told you before that in this episode with Bathsheba, David breaks 9 of the 10 commandments. The only one he didn't break was honoring the Sabbath and maybe he broke that one too since we don't know on what day this happened! What we will spend the majority of our time tonight discussing is 2 Samuel 12 when Nathan comes to confront David. The action that David takes after hearing from Nathan is what allows us to call him "a man after God's own heart." It is that action that we should use as an example as well. Let's talk about that as well as some of the other characters in this story tonight.

Thursday, May 28 - Ruth 1:16-17

Do you think Ruth was scared when she said these words to Naomi? I do. And yet, she had the courage to state this beautiful expression of love toward her

mother-in-law and stay committed to her deceased husband's family. What standing in the face of fear means is having courage. It is not about not being afraid. Whenever you embark on a new adventure in your life, there will be fear and anxiety. That's natural. When we are called by God to go on that new journey, let us walk with boldness and courage into the unknown because God is with us.

Ruth is committed to her future with Naomi. I will go, I will lodge, I will die, and I will be buried are the four statements of what Ruth intends to do. Are you that committed to the cause God is leading you toward? I know you are scared. I'd be concerned if there wasn't anxiety building in the face of change. That's natural. But don't let that concern lead you to turning around and going back from where you came. Instead, press forward like Ruth does. Have courage in the face of uncertainty. Don't let fear stop you from going where God is leading you.

Friday, May 29 - Luke 1:26-34

Over the last decade, several movie franchises (most based on book series) have cast the lead main character as a female heroine destined to save the world. The new *Star Wars* Trilogy, along with *The Hunger Games* and *Divergent*, follow this model. In these movies, the young heroines must overcome great odds to do their part in saving the world.

Our story today finds a young woman in a similar situation. Mary is most likely 14-16 years of age when the angel visits her to tell her she is pregnant. Of course, Mary is not the one who will save the world, but she is the one chosen by God to bring Jesus into the world. As she was confronted by the messenger of God (angel), she was certainly frightened (why did the angel say "Do not be afraid" if she wasn't?). Even in this moment that changed her plans forever, in the midst of this supernatural experience, she doesn't complain. She doesn't grow impatient with what God expects of her. She doesn't tell God no. Instead, all she asks is how this is even possible.

In my mind, there is no greater heroine in the Bible than teenage Mary. She is given the task to raise the Son of God. What task has God given you? Are you as obedient and courageous as Mary was? Pray today for God to give you that courage.

Saturday, May 30 - Mark 14:32-36

I am quite taken aback every time I read verse 36. There is no doubt in my mind that these are the words of someone who is afraid. And yet, much like the psalms always do in a time of prayer and anguish, Jesus comes back to recognizing his will is to do the Father's will.

The prayer of Jesus in verse 36 gives me hope for three reasons. The first reason is that it is not sinful to be afraid. Jesus is clearly afraid, and we know he was without sin. Fear is not what is sinful. What we do because of that fear is what can be sin. Jesus chooses the right path by submitting to the will of God, which leads to my second reason for hope in this passage: God gave Jesus strength in this difficult hour. The passage doesn't say that, but use your own prayer life as a guide. Isn't that what happens in prayer? God hears our cries and even if he doesn't answer the way we want, he comforts us in that special prayer time we have with God. The third reason Jesus' prayer gives me hope is that it is ok to ask God to change his mind. Jesus wants the outcome to be different. He prays for the outcome to be different. There is nothing wrong with asking God for a miracle or praying for an outcome you'd prefer. This does come with a caveat though. You must also end your prayer like Jesus does by saying "it's not what I want, but what you want."

I don't know what is giving you the most fear right now, but I do know that fear is not sinful. I also know you can take that fear straight to God and ask for a miracle. And even if you do not receive that miracle, God will provide comfort during your difficult days of anxiety. Also know that I am praying for you. If there is a need that you have that is specific, let me know so I can be praying. The more of God's people who are

praying, the better. Let's flood heaven with our prayers of petition and intercession of each other and our community.

Sunday, May 31 - Psalm 47

God is king forever! Let us worship our King this morning!