

# Greater Than Our Fears

Wayne Waibel – 07/07/2024

And so it begins. Our merry little band of disciples have been thrown into the fray of humanity armed only with the most basic understanding of faith. What they do not know, the doing should quickly teach them. That's the plan anyway.

When we exercise our faith in challenging ways on the world stage there is no guarantee of a righteous outcome. God calls us to faithfulness and obedience, not success. That's just the way it is.

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The thing that had the most profound effect on Jesus was not the lack of respect afforded at the hands of His neighbors and family – it was their lack of faith that He marveled at. So much so that He was unable to really do much of anything upon His return to Nazareth. He simply cannot remain too long among those who lack faith.

Before we get too judgmental in our impressions of the hometown folk, we should take a look at both the Corinthians in their elevation of certain super apostles over Paul, and the ancient Israelites in their generational dismissal of the covenant with Almighty God.

Who knows? It may very well be that humankind is incapable of any real, genuine - sustained allegiance to anything other than our own personal interests.

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The human capacity for investing in social norms, for believing in one's own preferences, is greater than the human capacity for faith. And our current world view is so terribly skewed that it is near impossible to break through that reality and find a landing strip anywhere near the kingdom of God.

Increasingly, we tend to see what we expect to see – and the expectation for faithfulness and grace is a very distant blur. I don't know if things were that much different back in the time Jesus walked the earth. Perhaps His astonishment at the lack of faith around Him had more to do with His expectations than the ways of the world.

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It's hard sometimes to look at the Gospel and understand that the volumes of wisdom and promise have anything to do with us here and now. The role of Jesus as proclaimer of the inbreaking of the divine can be so other worldly as to defy belief. And therein lies the rub. Our post-modern sensibilities tend to knock any hope of redemption beyond our grasp.

Christ knew this. His launching of the disciples into their ministry was the same act as preparing us in our time to do our part. We have the benefit of perspective and the long view; and numerous examples of what not to do. The chosen twelve had none of the sophistication and skill that we generally take for granted. And still, they deployed.

They went out into the world with one cloak, a pair of sandals and a walking stick. They didn't go looking for the finest place in all the region to find lodging – they stayed at the first home that would have them.

They spent their days healing the sick and proclaiming the good news that the reign of God had begun. They stayed until they were satisfied they had reached everyone in the area, and they moved on to the next.

These were not disciplined members of the Sanhedrin. There was nothing particularly religious about any one of them. And still they managed to fumble through and get the job done. They took the charge of Jesus seriously, and despite all of their imperfections, became the embodiment of their Lord.

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There is great risk inherent in speaking for and about God, but the word that comes from us must be the word for us as well. Faith brings authority – and authority brings responsibility. Ours is not a timid service. We are called to be greater than our fears.

The world, in many ways, is beginning a bold new era of candor. While we are becoming less tempted to blame the victim when bad things happen, we also have to guard against becoming too quick to canonize victims as well.

Until the reign of God supersedes man's inhumanity to man there will be inequities and injustice. There will also be attempts to reconcile and overcome. The hard truth is that we are woefully inept as a people when it comes to faith and belief. We are capable of great honor, but we are no stranger to shame either.

There is a rhythm and a flow to our daily lives. We each find that comfort zone in which to live and move and have our being. We try to be mindful of the world around us without becoming seduced by it. It is a most delicate balance to maintain, and to those who would lead - essential.

As followers of the Way, and believers in the Triune God, who has laid claim to this world and all who are in it, we have but one charge. To simply speak truth in love, from the heart, in our own words. If we do that, two things will take place. We will have honor, and we will never be ashamed. Amen.