

Saturday week ago... we watched that awesome movie... *I can only imagine*...& one of the features of that movie that really spoke to me was how often we allow fear to rule our lives... fear of failure...fear of the unknown... that fear of launching out into the deep & trusting GOD... but this isn't something new is it... within scripture... we see GOD reassuring the Children of Israel that he was with them... & they weren't to be *afraid*¹...

Sometimes... easier said than done... for most of us....

The word *fear* in it's various forms... is mentioned over 530 times²... within Scripture.

Maybe GOD knew we were a people who were prone to fear... But... as the NKJV states in **2 Timothy 1:7** *God has not given us a spirit of fear or timidity... but of power and of love and of a sound mind*. Imagine what our lives would be like if we had no fear.... What we could accomplish for the KoG.... if we didn't let the fear of man ensnare us [**Pr 29.25**]... Imagine what it would be like... if we had no fear of what others thought about us... because we were so secure in the love of our Heavenly Father... that we totally abandoned ourselves in His love... to the point that we trusted GOD completely...

in **1 John 4:18** (NIV2011) we read that... *There is no fear in agape. But perfect love drives out fear, because fear has to do with punishment. The one who fears is not made perfect in love....* fear & love are mutually exclusive...you can't love someone & fear them @ the same time...

- A fear of water implies a fear of drowning...
- A fear of fire... implies as fear of being burnt...
- A fear of G's judgement... implies a fear of being punished by GOD...

N.B. the only other occurrence of the Greek used here for punishment is used in **Matthew 25.46**.... & there it is talking about sorting the sheep & goats....

it's the goats that go to eternal punishment... not the sheep.... So often we forget that the punishments that we deserved... has already been poured out on Christ.... the price has been paid... we have been set free from the law of sin & death³...

Imagine what our lives could be like... if we lived in the reality of that...Imagine what our marriages would be like? What would our family life could be like.... if we were not afraid to trust & love one another... to be vulnerable with one another... to reach out & allow people to touch our lives & yet fear so often paralyzes us... from doing that very thing... & being all that we are in GOD....

& this is nothing new.... As followers of Jesus... we know these things....& yet fear holds us back from receiving all that Jesus came to achieve on the cross.... in **Luke 4.18** we read that... Jesus came *to proclaim freedom to the captives... to set free the oppressed...* he came to set us free from fear.... He came to bring restoration of the Father's love & healing into our lives... to bring restoration & healing into our relationships & our families.... So many of us do all the right Christian stuff ... & yet fear continues to hold us back from fully abandoning ourselves into our loving heavenly Father's embrace...

*Henry Nouwen*⁴... in his book... called... *The Return of the Prodigal Son...* states that... *we either live our life as if we have a home... or we live our life as if we don't have a home...* that is... we either live our lives... feeling safe... secure & at rest... in our heavenly Father's heart... experiencing His love as a child of the King... or we live our lives with fear & uncertainty.... or what *James Jordan refers 2 as... having an orphan heart...* Constantly struggling with... the fear of

¹ Number 14.9; Deut 3.22, Joshua 8.1,

² Fear, fears, afraid, Feared...

³ Romans 8.2

⁴ was a Dutch-born Catholic priest, professor and writer. His interests were rooted primarily in psychology, pastoral ministry, spirituality, social justice and community

trusting... the fear of rejection & the fear of opening our hearts to love... the 3 most common fears that people experience....

With the result being that... we often seek out counterfeit sources of comfort... that promise us so much... but deliver so little... & sooner or later has us trapped in unrealised hopes & unfulfilled dreams... & we find ourselves in a downwards spiral of sin... & instead of drawing our identity from the love of the Father... we have replaced His love with the counterfeit passions of the flesh.... *the lust of the flesh, the lust of the eyes, and the pride in one's lifestyle— is not from the Father, but is from the world⁵.*

& let's be honest... we all have counterfeit sources of comfort don't we... Every one of us have people or possessions we turn to... or attitudes or behaviours we fall back into... when life doesn't go the way we want it to... for some of us... it's chocolate.... for some of us it's mindless TV or computer games... & there R others.... we all have them... Counterfeit affections exert a strong pull on us... even when we know that they are counterfeit... *David Riddell calls it making friends with the enemy.... We have made friends with the enemy rather than dealing with these counterfeits...* & what stops us from doing this... it's fear.... it's not until we are prepared to let go of the counterfeit... that false sense of security & comfort... that we will be able to enjoy the warmth & security of the Father's embrace....

Living life as if we have a home... as a child of the great I am... means living to experience the Father's love on a continuous... ongoing basis.... But even as Christians... many of us live our lives as if we don't have a home.... We live.... think & act like fatherless orphans.... & why is that.... Because we have never truly embraced the Father's love.... We may know it here [heads].... But we haven't truly experienced it here [hearts].... & then when the storms of life hit us... we are afraid to trust... we are afraid to let go.... We are afraid to risk becoming vulnerable... in believing GOD & taking him @ his word... when he says I love you... [??] we have never taken the words that GOD spoke in *Jer 31.3* personally.... *I have loved you with an everlasting love*... the Hebrew here means... *a love for all time*... not just a love when things are going well.... Not just a love when we are doing the right thing... but for all time... even when we are messing up... GOD still loves us...

Part of the problem is that we don't love ourselves... we feel unlovable & therefore we find it difficult... if not nearly impossible....to believe that anyone else could love us... especially a Holy GOD.... The thought of Him loving us personally.... Seems almost too good to be true.... & much more than what we deserve... but that is the very point.... GOD does love us... for *God demonstrates his own love for us in this: While we were still sinners, Christ died for us⁶...* when we were @ our worst... He'd already paid the price for us... & in *1 Jn 4.10* we read.... *This is love: not that we loved God, but that he loved us and sent his Son as an atoning sacrifice for our sins.*

in *John 14.1-2* Jesus declares *Let not your heart be troubled; you believe in God, believe also in Me. In My Father's house are many mansions; if it were not so, I would have told you. I go to prepare a place for you....* Jesus has gone to prepare a place for us... a home... a place of safety & security... a place of warmth & love.... If you're having a bad hair day & think everyone is against you @ school or @ work & nobody is saying anything nice about you... home is the place where you can go & hear the voice of your Father speaking over you... No matter what anyone else says about you... you are mine... you are the child I love... you are the one on whom my favour rests.... Home is where you

⁵ *1 John 2:16 (HCSB)*

⁶ *Romans 5.8*

constantly hear the voice of the Father speaking his affirmation over us... speaking his love over you... speaking his forgiveness over you⁷... home is where we experience his compassion⁸... his grace... his love...

Without this revelation of the Father's love to us & that we have a home in Him... it becomes very easy to live our lives as an orphan... as if we don't have a home... to live a life ruled by fear... because it makes us unable to emotionally connect with GOD in a healthy manner... or anyone else for that matter... living like an orphan means struggling constantly with fear of trusting... It's a life of independence... where you believe you are completely on your own... & isn't that part of the great Kiwi physic... that self-made man... that independent spirit... rather than that interdependence as G designed us to be ...

Whether you live your life as if you have a home... or whether you live your life as if you don't have a home... depends on how you view GOD...& what you believe... GOD thinks about you....

If you believe that GOD loves you... you will live like a child of the King.... But if you believe that GOD is mad @ you... & that you always have to find ways 2 appease him... you will live as an orphan... a slave....

This is an important distinction... because whatever you believe GOD feels about you ... is the way you will treat others.... Is GOD a task master to be obeyed or is he a loving heavenly Father....

I believe GOD is calling his people out of have toos & servant hood into sonship.... In **John 15:15** we read.... *I no longer call you servants, because a servant does not know his master's business. Instead, I have called you friends, for everything that I learned from my Father I have made known to you...*

Servant here is **slave**.... Someone who must obey every whim of the master... no matter what... we are no longer slaves & we need to stop thinking of ourselves as such....

the word here for **friend** is **philos**.... Although translated here as friend... **it originally meant someone who was dear or valuable**.... This verse is declaring not only a transformation in our status... but also one of immense love... we are all people who are dear & valuable to the Father... we are no longer slaves... but children of the King of Kings... & he's calling us home.... Come home to me all you who are weary & heavy burden... & I will give you rest for your weary souls.... Stop all the striving and rest in my love ... For my yoke is easy, and my burden is light.⁹

Christ came from the Father... a place of love....a place of peace... a place of security... to this earth... to die on the cross... to make it possible for his home... to become our home... that we would know that we aren't orphans... that we aren't abandoned... that the Father is always there... & how do we know this.... he **put his Spirit in our hearts as a deposit, guaranteeing what is to come**¹⁰....

John 6:38-40 tells us *For I have come down from heaven not to do my will but to do the will of him who sent me.* & who sent him... the Father... & what was the Father's will... **v 40** tells us... *For my Father's will pretty clear really... is that everyone who looks to the Son and believes in him shall have eternal life, and I will raise them up at the last day*....The father wants us all to know that... more than anything else... he wants to have a relationship with us... his children... that we have a Father in Heaven who loves us... & longs for us to be there with him....we have a home... we have a father... we are children of the King who loves us with an everlasting love....

⁷ Romans 8.1

⁸ Etime 34.6 **The LORD, the LORD, the compassionate and gracious God, slow to anger, abounding in love and faithfulness, maintaining love to thousands, and forgiving wickedness, rebellion and sin.**

⁹ **NRSV - Mt 11:29-30**

¹⁰ **2 Corinth 1.22**

Today... as we conclude our time together this morning - sit + listen to this song (the Father's song by Matt Redman¹¹) ... & as we do... may we receive a fresh revelation of just how much GOD loves us...

¹¹ <https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=esapsbVTIMETIMEsc>