

O. Intro:

*Recently I was sitting with some friends in the evening and we were talking about what God had done in our lives and was doing in our lives.

*We thought back in time and then looked around at the present time and we helped each other see God in all of it.

*As we did our faith, and even our courage, began to lift like a rising tide...we could feel it happen.

*We all have fear.

*Often what we fear and how much we fear is based on our stage of life...young and old people have different types and levels of fear.

*It can also depend on the current circumstances of our live and even our personalities.

*Sometimes people will have no current sense or awareness of fear...then suddenly, with little or no warning something will happen that will make them fearful.

*Fear of what your physical body might do to you, or fear of what it already is doing to you, or to someone you love...can grip our hearts.

*However it manifests itself, we all have fear...or will.

*Faith, confidence in God, is the antidote for fear.

*Courage flows from that faith.

*God uses friends of a certain type...to pour courage into our hearts.

Mark 6:45 Immediately Jesus made his disciples get into the boat and go on ahead of him to Bethsaida, while he dismissed the crowd. 46 After leaving them, he went up on a mountainside to pray. 6:47 When evening came, the boat was in the middle of the lake, and he was alone on land. 48 He saw the disciples straining at the oars, because the wind was against them. About the fourth watch of the night he went out to them, walking on the lake. He was about to pass by them, 49 but when they saw him walking on the lake, they thought he was a ghost. They cried out, 50 because they all saw him and were terrified. Immediately he spoke to them and said, "Take courage! It is I. Don't be afraid." 51 Then he climbed into the boat with them, and the wind died down. They were completely amazed, 52 for they had not understood about the loaves; their hearts were hardened.

*John's gospel helps fill in some of the background here.

*Jesus sent his guys off in the boat while he stayed to dismiss the crowd.

*Evidently what was happening is the crowd was ready to start an insurrection...and Jesus was going to be their "forced leader."

*They were excited about his miracle of providing free food so they figured he would make a great king.

John 6:14 After the people saw the miraculous sign that Jesus did, they began to say, "Surely this is the Prophet who is to come into the world." 15 Jesus, knowing that they intended to come and make him king by force, withdrew again to a mountain by himself.

*Jesus has already resisted the temptation to reign over a temporal kingdom in his wilderness encounter with Satan.

*He had come to usher in an eternal kingdom so he had to continue to educate the misguided but enthusiastic crowds.

*Crowds enamored by his signs but unaware of what the signs indicated or pointed to.

*We are not sure how he dismissed these crowds...but later on when some of the same crowd once again chased him across to the other side of the lake he told them this...

John 6:26 "I tell you the truth, you are looking for me, not because you saw miraculous signs but because you ate the loaves and had your fill.

*They wanted him to become King, not because they understood the signs pointed to his purpose but rather because the signs met their temporary needs and desires.

*He then went straight up on the mountainside looking down on the Lake of Galilee to pray.

*When Jesus was pressed, he prayed.

*When Jesus was tempted, he prayed.

*When Jesus was facing decisions, he prayed.

*When Jesus was busy, he prayed.

*Not just a hurried, on the run kind of prayer...he withdrew...turned off his cell phone...was alone with the Father.

*If this was true for him, how much more true should it be for us?

*If you are so busy, so stressed, so overwhelmed, so crunched for time...that you cannot see how you can carve out some dedicated time alone with God.

*You desperately need to do just that...you cannot afford not to.

***Jesus set himself up on the hill overlooking the lake and from his prayer vantage point he could see his guys straining against the wind.**

*They are not in danger like they were earlier from a storm.

*However, its between 3 & 6 am...they were already tired and they had not had a chance to rest.

*Now they are rowing against a wind, in the middle of the night...can you imagine the morale level on the boat at this time?

*I'm pretty sure it wasn't good, and if they were talking to each other, I can't imagine at this point it was very edifying.

*These guys were not above an argument even during the best of times.

*Galilee is a lake about 4 miles across and with a Passover full moon shining on the water Jesus could easily see them in their boat.

*By the way, standing on a shoreline a human eye can see a little over 3 miles before the earth's curvature dips below the line of sight.

*Standing on a hill humans can see much, much farther...so this was not necessarily a miraculous sense of sight...but it could have been.

*Jesus was up on the hill, likely praying for his friends, as he watched them down in the lake below.

*Eventually he walks down to the lake (Galilee is in a basin) and then proceeds to walk across the lake.

*By the way, something that might seem a waste of time but I have found to be very helpful is to spend a few minutes contemplating what actually happened in physical terms when Jesus walked on water.

*So did he alter the molecules of the water, or affect gravity, or some other interesting phenomena.

*"No Terry it was spiritual, it was a miracle."

*Actually it was a physical miracle...Jesus got lighter (gravity changed) or the water got heavier (the molecules changed) or something like that.

*The reason thinking about this is not an exercise in futility is because even though we cannot discover what actually happened here.

-Thinking about the fact that it did happen and doing so in real terms helps us train our minds in regards to reading the Bible as a book of reality.

*So he is physically walking on the lake.

*When the boys spot him they believe he is a ghost ...the Greek is "phantasm"

-An apparition...water spirit or something.

*They all see him and are terrified and cry out in fear.

*All twelve grown men, begin to shout.

*What are they shouting? Are they cursing? Yelling, "row faster"? "Help us Jesus?"

*They are tired, it's the middle of the night and they see a spook walking by them on the lake.

*They respond in fear, just like they did when the storm threatened their lives.

*When danger of a known kind or danger of an unknown kind has come upon these guys their response is fear and not faith.

*Jesus immediately spoke to them..."Guys, buck up (have courage), its me...don't be scared."

*He then climbed into the boat and the wind died down (another display of control over the elements of nature.)

*They were completely amazed and not just because this was amazing (and truly it was)

*But because they still failed to understand who Jesus truly is.

*They were amazed in this instance because they had not understood what they had just seen happen when Jesus fed the 5k.

*How could they not understand what they had seen with their own eyes?

***Because what we see with our eyes can be blinded by our hearts.**

*It's the same reason the crowds had not understood...their presuppositions colored their perceptions.

*Their presuppositions here are said to be the result of their "hard hearts."

*Here is the diagnosis of the cause of their fear:

1. They were afraid
 2. Because they had missed the whole point of the miracle of the feeding
 3. Because their hearts were hard.
- Hard heart--missed God--fear

*So the reason they could see and not see was the condition of their hearts.

*Once again this shows how even if God were to do a miracle a minute for each and every one of us it would have no impact on our faith or serve to lessen our fear...if our hearts remain unchanged towards God.

***Why were they in the boat without Jesus? I think he was continuing to train them to trust.**

***Remember earlier in the chapter...**when Jesus sent the guys out in pairs and told them to take no provisions.

*He wanted them to learn to have faith, to trust him...so why didn't he send them out alone?

*I mean if he wanted them to trust him, why give them a partner...why not just "go solo with Jesus?"

*Because that is not and never has been his plan.

*He is training them to trust, but trust training is team training...its not solo.

*Then when they return from their mission trip...he says they are to feed a crowd of over 5000 people.

*They are tired, depleted...and without the resources to do something like that...but he invited them as a group to join him.

*They saw the 5000+ fed...yet somehow, their hearts were hard.

*Clouded by their own presuppositions, full of their own agendas and self-will.

*So they were able to see Jesus do the unthinkable, the amazing...and then in a very short time

"...they all were terrified."

*Somehow this work of God in front of them did not translate into real faith when a real life situation required it.

*I believe one of the reasons Jesus sent them off in the boat without him and went up on the hill to pray for them...was that he was continuing his training in trust.

*You would think that out of twelve one or two would have "gotten it"...but not so..."**all saw and were terrified.**"

*What is most encouraging here is that Jesus did not just keep walking by...

"Really, I just let you take part in a miraculous feeding of over 5k people, just after you told me the stories of all you had experienced on your mission trip...and now, when you are physically tired...you revert back to fear that quickly."

"You guys just keep rowing, I'll just walk to shore, and I'm too frustrated to deal with you."

*Instead he said, "**Be courageous, don't be afraid**"

*Then he climbed in the boat with them.

*Great verse on being a friend in a variety of situations is:

1Th. 5:14 And we urge you, brothers, warn those who are idle, encourage the timid, help the weak, be patient with everyone.

*Mark is the one who diagnoses the issue here...their hearts were hard.

*This hardness meant that the work of God in and around them fell on hard soil and did not lead to faith.

*Sure they could probably talk the faith talk, but when the challenge was real...they were unable to walk a faith walk.

***Let's go back again to the Exodus:** A story of a similar lack of faith in spite of many, many reasons why they should have learned to trust God.

*The people of Israel had journeyed across the desert now they stood at the threshold of the Promised Land.

*Moses sent 12 in to get some Intel on the land.

*When they returned here's what happened.

Numbers 13: 27

10 of the spies said "We went into the land to which you sent us, and it does flow with milk and honey! Here is its fruit. 28 But the people who live there are powerful, and the cities are fortified and very large."

Caleb could see where this one going..."He said... we should go up and take possession of the land, for we can certainly do it."

But the men who had gone up with him said, "We can't attack those people; they are stronger than we are."

The people at large were being swayed...discouraged.

***They went out..."The land we explored devours those living in it. All the people we saw there are of great size. 33 We seemed like grasshoppers in our own eyes, and we looked the same to them."**

*Now all the community wept and grumbled...

Num. 14 "If only we had died in Egypt! Or in this desert! 3 Why is the LORD bringing us to this land only to let us fall by the sword? Our wives and children will be taken as plunder. Wouldn't it be better for us to go back to Egypt?" 4 And they said to each other, "We should choose a leader and go back to Egypt."

*Moses and Aaron fell on their faces, distraught.

*Caleb and Joshua the two who had faith...were also distraught...they cried out

"The land we passed through and explored is exceedingly good. 8 If the LORD is pleased with us, he will lead us into that land, a land flowing with milk and honey, and will give it to us. 9 Only do not rebel against the LORD. And do not be afraid of the people of the land, because we will swallow them up. Their protection is gone, but the LORD is with us. Do not be afraid of them."

*God as well was not just a little frustrated with the people.

11 The LORD said to Moses, "How long will these people treat me with contempt? How long will they refuse to believe in me, in spite of all the miraculous signs I have performed among them?"

*Does this sound familiar?

*The miracles of God among the people to rescue, protect, guide, and provide were incredible.

*Yet, when faced with a situation that they felt to be out of their control...they reverted to fear.

*At least most of them did...two of the twelve...Caleb and Joshua showed faith.

-And two who had stayed behind, Moses and Araon did as well.

*But the fear crowd won the day.

*Lets' go back to the NT, to Hebrews.

*Last week we looked at Heb 3:1-6 how Christ is the true shepherd of God's people of whom Moses was a forerunner.

*Let's look at v 7 where the comparison shifts from one between Moses and Jesus to a comparison of their followers.

Heb. 3:7 So, as the Holy Spirit says: "Today, if you hear his voice, 8 do not harden your hearts as you did in the rebellion, during the time of testing in the desert, 9 where your fathers tested and tried me and for forty years saw what I did. 10 That is why I was angry with that generation, and I said, 'Their hearts are always going astray, and they have not known my ways.' 11 So I declared on oath in my anger, 'They shall never enter my rest.'"

*Here the writer is referring to the results of their choice to harden their hearts in spite of all that God had done for them in the Exodus.

*They were not going to enter his rest...the promised land...not one person of age did except Joshua and Caleb

*Then he turns it to a word of challenge for his readers and for us...that we make the choice to not have a heart that is hard towards God.

12 See to it, brothers, that none of you has a sinful, unbelieving heart that turns away from the living God.

*So evidently a heart that is hard towards God is something we can choose to avoid...we can actually "see to it."

*And how are we to "see to it" that our hearts are not hard?

13 But encourage one another daily, as long as it is called Today, so that none of you may be hardened by sin's deceitfulness.

*Encourage: parakaleo "To call alongside"

*There are three main sources of "encouragement" given us by God:

1. The Holy Spirit.

John 14:26 But the Helper(paraclete: encourager), the Holy Spirit, whom the Father will send in my name, he will teach you all things and bring to your remembrance all that I have said to you.

*Paraclete: Para + kaleo...encourager

*He will encourage us by speaking to us, reminding us what Jesus has said and done.

2. God's word

Rom. 15:4 For everything that was written in the past was written to teach us, so that through endurance and the encouragement of the Scriptures we might have hope.

*God will encourage us by speaking to us through his written word to remind us of what he has done.

3. Our Friends

13 But encourage one another daily, as long as it is called Today, so that none of you may be hardened by sin's deceitfulness.

*Encourage(parakaleo)one another daily...means...pouring courage into one another must be ongoing, persistent, consistent.

*What does this encouragement consist of?

*Same as that of the encouragement from the Holy Spirit and the Word of God...

-Pointing one another back to Jesus...to remember, to take hold of with our minds what is true...what God has done and is doing.

*Especially when our courage is lacking.

*As long as it's called today...denotes a sense of urgency.

*It will not always be today...the opportunity is here now, but it is passing.

*Pour courage in now so you will not be hardened by "sin's deceitfulness."

*Sin...is a liar...it never delivers on its promises...however it is very persuasive.

*It "speaks to us"...from our hearts, from others, from the world around us.

*We need to hear from God...not just from sin.

*We need to have courage spoken to us...God speaks through the Holy Spirit, His Word, and His people...our friends.

***When your friends "speak" encouragement to you, the kind that points you to Jesus...God himself is encouraging you.**

*I'm not talking...people telling you what God wants you do, or "having some decisive word from God for you."

*We already have that, it is written down...our role as encouragers is to walk alongside our friends and point them to Jesus...to what he has already said and done.

Let's tie it all together and make our application:

*Jesus is training his friends to trust.

*They have seen much, experienced much...but still their hearts remained hard.

*He has given them teammates, friends...he has given them the opportunity to influence each other towards courage and faith.

*They failed, as a whole.

*In the wilderness of Exodus, at least 2 of the 12 responded with faith and not fear.

*Here among the 12 that followed Jesus, 12 of 12 responded with fear.

*But the good news is there was not just twelve, there was 13...It was Jesus and his twelve.

*Jesus showed them then how he expected them to live their lives together..."take courage, don't be afraid, then he climbed in the boat with them."

*This is what he wanted them to do with each other.

*Wouldn't it have been great if Peter had said, "Come on boys, have courage...I don't know what that thing is, or what it might do to us...but from what I have experienced so far, Jesus is stronger than that thing...so have faith..."

*"Oh, wait, that thing IS Jesus...who knew!"

*But he didn't have that faith...at least not yet...look ahead a bit what do we find in Peter and the other?

*Men full of faith and not fear.

Acts 4:3 They seized Peter and John they put them in jail until the next day...

4:8 Then Peter, the uneducated fishermen, filled with the Holy Spirit...begin to preach the good news to the leaders and the distinguished crowd.

***Acts 4:13: When they saw the courage of Peter and John (the boys were still out in teams) and realized that they were unschooled, ordinary men, they were astonished and they took note that these men had been with Jesus**

*These men of fear had become men of faith...but they still had the buddy system going.

***We looked at the three prime sources of encouragement...I'm going to land on the one that is evident from this narrative today: Friends.**

*Jesus, their friend...came alongside them, he called them to faith and courage.

*He was showing them the way...in two ways.

1. Their faith was in him and he was going to be their source of courage.
2. They would need to do for each other what he was doing for them...remind them of this fact.

Heb. 3:13 But encourage one another daily, as long as it is called Today, so that none of you may be hardened by sin's deceitfulness.

Lunch:

*Yesterday I went to lunch with my friends Justin and Matt and I asked them "What are you afraid of?"
-They told me.

*I told them what I was afraid of...our stories were different...but similar.

*We talked about the role of friends...each other, in living lives of faith and courage.

*Then last Justin went home and took his little girl on a date...he asked her the same question..."Jordan, what are you afraid of?"

*Her response was..."Going into the basement."

*He asked, "Is there anything that makes it better or easier."

*She answered, "Yes, if someone goes with me." (even her little brother)

*She has it figured out.

God uses friendships that foster faith and lead to courage:

*Don't despair the fact that you are unable to stay on track all by yourself.

*Don't be surprised if your fear grows when you become isolated from others who are pursuing God.

*This is the plan; this is the design.

Matt 18:20 For where two or three come together in my name, there am I with them.

*This does not mean Jesus is not with you when you are alone...it does indicate something special and powerful about living a life of faith with others.

***Three applications:**

1. If you get this...if you see the value of paying the price to have these friendships that foster faith leading to courage.

-Keep at it.

*The cost/benefit analysis will always be in your favor if you do.

*Don't fret that these relationships are imperfect, they always will be.

*Don't be dismayed by the fact that you still, even after all this time...need others:

-It is a sign of our weakness that we will always need help

-But it is a sign of maturity when we recognize our need for help...and go get it.

2. If you don't buy into this...please don't harden your heart to the possibility.

*Perhaps your presupposition or past experience has made this message seem untrue, unreal to you.

*It is possible that you have been around people who professed faith but whose lives and lips do not build courage in you...their words drained faith from you.

*If you are gun shy...Simple challenge...spend some time pondering Heb 3:13

*Ask, in light of this great truth...what does God want for you, from you?

3. Encourage people...very, very, very rarely do the people in your life need you to rebuke them.

-I'm not talking about training children, don't misapply.

*I'm talking about you and your friends.

1Th. 5:14 And we urge you, brothers, warn those who are idle, encourage the timid, help the weak, be patient with everyone.

*"Terry, God has made me a prophet....I speak my mind."

*Prophets speak for God out of concern for their good and God's glory, fools speak their minds with little regard for what that means to the other person.

*Encourage...point people to the Lord Jesus with your words.

*I used to underestimate the power of encouragement to bring change...I don't anymore.

1Pet. 4:11 If anyone speaks, he should do it as one speaking the very words of God.

*Awesome, humbling, powerful opportunity...we use our words to point discouraged friends to find their courage in God.

*And in the process our friends get to hear from God with their own ears, through our own lips.

SMALL GROUP NOTES

Mark 6:45-56

Intro:

*What are you afraid of?

*Have your fears changed in your life? If so, how?

Read:

Mark 6:45 Immediately Jesus made his disciples get into the boat and go on ahead of him to Bethsaida, while he dismissed the crowd. 46 After leaving them, he went up on a mountainside to pray. 6:47 When evening came, the boat was in the middle of the lake, and he was alone on land. 48 He saw the disciples straining at the oars, because the wind was against them. About the fourth watch of the night he went out to them, walking on the lake. He was about to pass by them, 49 but when they saw him walking on the lake, they thought he was a ghost. They cried out, 50 because they all saw him and were terrified. Immediately he spoke to them and said, "Take courage! It is I. Don't be afraid." 51 Then he climbed into the boat with them, and the wind died down. They were completely amazed, 52 for they had not understood about the loaves; their hearts were hardened.

Discuss:

1. How would you explain Mark's statement that the disciples were "amazed, because they had not understood about the loaves, because their hearts were hardened?" How do these factors all tie in together?

* Terry said, "What we see with our eyes can be blinded by our hearts." How does apply here and in other situations in our lives?

2. Jesus was intentional about getting solitary time to pray. It is common to believe since he was who he was this would be expected.

*For instance... "He was special, he was the Savior, of course he would pray a lot but me, I'm a regular person, I can't be expected to pray like that."

*What are your thoughts about the pattern Jesus had in life regarding prayer and time alone with God the Father? What are the implications and applications for our lives?

3. How can using your "imagination" be an important part of reading the Scriptures?

-Not as in making things up but rather as in "seeing" what happened in your mind in a way that helps you remember it is real.

-What might you be able to do to practice reading the Bible as "real?" Not just "believing" it is true but actually "seeing" it as so in your mind?

4. When Moses sent the twelve into Canaan ten came back and caused the entire nation to quake in fear. Two of the twelve tried to cast vision for faith and not fear. They were over ruled. Read the passage from Hebrews listed below and discuss how the author uses the Exodus as a challenge to the readers of his letter. **Heb. 3:7 So, as the Holy Spirit says: "Today, if you hear his voice, 8 do not harden your hearts as you did in the rebellion, during the time of testing in the desert, 9 where your fathers tested and tried me and for forty years saw what I did. 10 That is why I was angry with that generation, and I said,**

‘Their hearts are always going astray, and they have not known my ways.’ 11 So I declared on oath in my anger, ‘They shall never enter my rest.’”

5. In that passage you see the phrase "hard hearts" used again. The implications here are that a hard heart is a choice that is made. What is a hard heart? What does a hard heart led to in our lives? What would it look like to choose to "not harden your heart?"

6. In today's narrative, Jesus served in the role of casting vision for faith and not fear. The disciples responded but it would be some time later that they finally begin to live out of their faith and not their fear. -Again in Hebrews the author gives a warning...

12 See to it, brothers, that none of you has a sinful, unbelieving heart that turns away from the living God.

-Then he gives a challenge...

13 But encourage one another daily, as long as it is called Today, so that none of you may be hardened by sin’s deceitfulness.

*Discuss how "encouraging one another daily" has implications for living in faith and not fear.

7. In a real way when we speak encouragement to on another we are speaking **for** God **to** each other.

1Pet. 4:11 If anyone speaks, he should do it as one speaking the very words of God.

*Can you conceive of hearing a word of encouragement from another person as hearing the very voice of God speaking to you? Why or why not?

8. We can become dismayed because we "leak" faith and continually need to be encouraged by others. From what you know of the Bible and life, is this normal or abnormal?

-If you think it is normal do you believe it should be? Why or why not?

9. What would it mean for you personally if you no longer worried (if you do) about the reality that you need others to help you in your journey of faith and instead enjoyed those God has given you as well as became more intentional about pouring encouragement into them?

10. 1 Thess. 5:14 demonstrates a multi-faceted approach to speaking to people in ways that point them towards Jesus. Discuss how this is so.

1Th. 5:14 And we urge you, brothers, warn those who are idle, encourage the timid, help the weak, be patient with everyone.

Apply:

***Spend some time talking to each other of ways you have seen God at work in your lives over the years.**

***Talk also about how the reality of God has implications for your potential fears going forward.**

THE GOSPEL OF

MARK



**“FOR EVEN THE
SON OF MAN
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MARK 10:45

J. STILL

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The Exodus and The Gospel

Heb. 3:7-11 So, as the Holy Spirit says:
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1. If you get this...keep at it.

2. If you don't buy in...be open to it.

3. Encourage people!

**1 Thess. 5:14 And we urge you,
brothers, warn those who are idle,
encourage the timid, help the weak, be
patient with everyone.**

**1 Pet. 4:11 If anyone speaks, he should
do it as one speaking the very words of
God.**