



Fear Not Hopelessness

by Pastor Doug Lutz

God heard the boy crying, and the angel of God called to Hagar from heaven and said to her, "What is the matter, Hagar? Do not be afraid—Genesis 21:17

Fear is a conundrum. There's instinctual fear—the *good* kind of fear that keeps most of us alive (or at least moderately functional). Then there's anxious fear—the *not-so-good* fear that threatens to lock the door and throw away the key to hope. When this not-so-good fear hits, the only solution I can think of when dark shadows of anxiety darken my day is to sit down and cry. Just sob.

That's what Hagar, an Egyptian slave woman, does. She weeps. She sits in the sand and bawls her eyes out. Not for herself but for her son Ishmael; a boy who, like her, was sent away into a barren desert to die.

Can you imagine a single mom with no rights, no financial safety-net and no prospects for a husband wandering in the middle of a desert with a self-consumed, tear-filled teenager? It was anyone's worst nightmare: let alone for a slave woman. She had a social situation and family dynamic that was grim at best with little hope for change.

I don't know about you but I can honestly say that my despairing episodes of personal drama are relatively short lived compared to this. Yet all the "fear not's" in the world rarely reach me when I'm consumed with hopelessness.

The same would seem true with the current racial tensions in the states that seems to have infected the entire world. That's because fear, like a virus, is

contagious. When we choose to hate, ignore, marginalize or abuse anyone long enough, the pent-up fear and hopelessness *within* can produce a wide range of emotions from apathy to anger and riotous violence *without*.

How is it, then, that Hagar was able to find comfort in the words “fear not” when her family’s future seemed so bleak? Wait ... before you answer, think a moment longer.

Do you really think God says “fear not” because He wants us to believe fear is unfounded and therefore always bad? Or is it possible that God wants us to acknowledge fear and embrace all its ugliness—even with sobs—in order to gain His perspective about a given situation or unchanging circumstance: to really know Him and that He actually has been in the middle of our deepest despair before we ever got there?

At the end of the day, Hagar knew God saw her and cared for her even though she was still a single mom in the desert with a jobless teenager. How about you? Do you wonder if God is around? Do you believe God genuinely sees you... is present... and cares enough to walk with you ... right through the middle of your deepest anxiety?

Fear not Hopelessness.

Prayer resolve: Today I choose hope with Christ in the midst of my greatest fear.

Hungry for Life!

Things I'm Thinking About

Here is what I am hearing, learning and thinking about as we move through our current crisis into a re-calibrated future and beyond. This week's thought that I want to put forward for consideration and prayer concerns cultural tensions that lay far beneath the fault-line of COVID-19.

Dealing with Racial Tensions

I think most would agree that racial division, no matter the culture or geographical location, is a pressing concern. While we may not recognize it on the surface in the East Kootenays, it exists under the water and remains largely unaddressed. Yet it is a deeply biblical and spiritual issue. To not address it at

this time of global unrest is like overlooking the elephant in the cultural living room.

If the church is the hope of the world—and I think it is—how might we model racial unity as God’s people? Here are at least two ideas we might consider:

1. Learn to recognize personal prejudice

If you think you are free of prejudice toward people who are different from yourself, just listen to your language. Words like “they” and “those people” and any number of *labels* for a particular people group are a good indicator that prejudice is at work within. Such distinctions are a way of devaluing others and primes the pump for suspicion, anxiety, self-justification and disunity on a basic human level. And quite frankly, it is sinful behavior that emanates from a hardened heart and opposes the very God who loves all and whom we claim to love.

Here we would do well to remember that all humans are made in God’s image and are sacred objects of his affection.

2. Surprise the world with love

As Christ followers, we have something to offer the world that it cannot achieve on its own. With Christ as our center, love is the one thing that will draw others in. Jesus said it this way:

“My prayer is not for them alone. I pray also for those who will believe in me through their message, that all of them may be one, Father, just as you are in me and I am in you. May they also be in us so that the world may believe that you have sent me” (John 17:20-21).

Love is the only remedy for our fear and anxiety; especially when it comes to people who are unknown to us. If it is true that the most anxious person in the room has the most power, how much more so the most loving person? Fear, anxiety and prejudice cannot co-exist with Christ’s love. In this way perfect love casts out fear (1 John 4:18) and paves the way for unity that can cross any racial and cultural divide. And it starts with you and me. May God find us willing and courageous enough to practice what we confess to believe.

Want to share your thoughts, insights or questions! [Click here.](#)

Want to share your thoughts, insights or questions!

[Click here.](#)

Want to help others in our community? [Click Here.](#)

Have a Prayer Request? [Click Here.](#)

Looking for a message or Worship Short? [Click Here.](#)

Want to Give? [Click Here.](#)
