

FRIDAY 5.10.19 Acts 8:5, 25; 10:9-28

Even after his vision came three times, Peter didn't fully get the point. Verses 27-28 of the story suggest that meeting a large group of Gentiles eager to hear the gospel was his "aha!" moment. Have you ever had a particular contact or experience that broke through some prejudice of yours, and opened your eyes to God's inclusive mission in the world?

Prayer: Lord God, it feels so natural, in so many ways, for me to divide the human family into "us" and "them." Teach me what you taught Peter—that in your eyes, there is only "us." Amen.

SATURDAY 5.11.19 1 Galatians 3:26-28, 1 John 4:18-21

At the foundation of all Christian faith is the trust that God loves us, that God created human beings out of love and for love. This was (and is) quite extraordinary. Why would perfect love drive out fear? Have you ever experienced a situation in which as love developed for another person, fear of that person decreased and disappeared? Can you think of practical steps that move you in the direction of caring about "others," about people that you may see as dangerous enemies?

Prayer: Lord Jesus, sometimes I find your ways appealing. Sometimes I find them hard. I need your grace to guide and energize me to more and more see everyone as a person you love. Amen.

Family Activity: Jesus served and shared God's love with others in many ways. Martin Luther King, Jr. followed in the footsteps of Jesus and sought to do the same. How does your family work together to share God's love with others? Select a way to serve others together. Ask an older child or youth to research some volunteer opportunities in your area. He or she could explore the church website (lcrmarion.org) for activities in which your family can participate. Consider brainstorming about some less-structured ways you can serve others with God's love, such as helping others in your neighbor or at school. At a family gathering, ask the child or youth to present these opportunities to the rest of the family. Pray for God's guidance as you discuss the possibilities. Choose one or two ways your family can share God's love with others.



**May 5, 2019 - Unafraid - Living with Courage and Hope
"Fear of the Other"**

Leviticus 19:33-34— When an alien resides in your land, you shall not oppose the alien. The alien who resides with you shall be to you as the citizen among you; you shall love the alien as yourself, for you were aliens in the land of Egypt: I am the LORD your God.

Matthew 5:43-48 ⁴³"You have heard that it was said, "You shall love your neighbor and hate your enemy."⁴⁴ But I say to you, Love your enemies and pray for those who persecute you,⁴⁵ so that you may be children of your Father in heaven; for he makes his sun rise on the evil and on the good, and sends rain on the righteous and on the unrighteous.⁴⁶ For if you love those who love you, what reward do you have? Do not even the tax collectors do the same?⁴⁷ And if you greet only your brothers and sisters, what more are you doing than others? Do not even the Gentiles do the same?⁴⁸ Be perfect, therefore, as your heavenly Father is perfect.

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Impalas at the water hole – our underlying fear that someone's after us

Our past and present-day fears of the other

- * FDR – "only thing to fear is fear itself"... yet 100,000 Japanese-Americans citizens put in internment camps after Pearl Harbor
- * J.C. Nichols – neighborhood covenants in KC; Troost Avenue border
- * 9/11 and the fear of Muslims that resulted

Tools to combat our fears

- *Cognitive behavior therapy – Feeling Good by David Burns
- * Common cognitive distortions that lead to fear, anxiety
- *Get the facts – violent crime down by half since 1990

Guidance from Scripture

- * Leviticus – love the alien/immigrant, for you were once the same
- * Jesus – love those whom you fear– get to know them... Matthew the tax collector & of Simon the Zealot were natural enemies, yet disciples
- * Crossing the "Troost Avenues" of our day to combat our fears

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Your notes: _____

MONDAY 5.6.19 Psalm 27:1-5

Within the confines of time, the promises of Psalm 27 do not always come true. But our God is eternal, not bound by time, so we need not fear—anyone or anything. Dr. Martin Luther King, Jr. said, at the funeral of four girls killed in a church bombing in Birmingham, Alabama, “Like the ever-changing cycle of the seasons, life has the soothing warmth of the summers and the piercing chill of its winters. But through it all, God walks with us. Never forget that God is able to lift you from the fatigue of despair to the buoyancy of hope.”

Israelites who prayed and sang this psalm saw Babylon destroy Jerusalem, saw Rome overpower their land—yet they still trusted. Christians saw Jesus crucified, the apostles Paul and Peter martyred by Rome, prayed the psalm in dim Roman catacombs—yet they still trusted. What difficulties test your trust, and seek to make you afraid? How can you trust that in the end God will always keep the promise to set you up high, safe on a rock?

Prayer: Lord Jesus, grow in me an ever-deepening trust in you eternal presence and power, and your great heart of love. Amen.

TUESDAY 5.7.19 Leviticus 19:33-34, Deuteronomy 10:14-19

We often think of Old Testament Israel as exclusive and narrow toward non-Israelites. But here we read, “Any immigrant who lives with you must be treated as if they were one of your citizens. You must love them as yourself.” Israel’s faith stressed God’s concern for all people, especially those who needed help. In theory, Israel was a nation in which everyone was responsible to seek the well-being of all.

All over the world, in virtually every nation and culture, those who are “different,” who are “outsiders,” face prejudice because of ethnicity, poverty, lack of education, or many other markers of “otherness.” When have you seen people who are “other” treated that way, or been treated that way yourself? How can you make things better rather than worse when such ugly actions happen?

Prayer: Lord of all, when difference offends me, or when prejudice enrages me, remind me that you came to change my heart. Help me, like you, to meet evil with good. Amen.

WEDNESDAY 5.8.19 Matthew 5:43-48

Dr. Martin Luther King, Jr. preached his last Christmas Eve sermon on December 24, 1967. It included these words: “*Agape* is an overflowing love which seeks nothing in return.... This is what Jesus meant when he said, ‘Love your enemies.’ And I’m happy that he didn’t say, ‘Like your enemies,’ because there are some people that I find it pretty difficult to like....I’ve seen too much hate to want to hate, myself...every time I see it, I say to myself, hate is too great a burden to bear.”

Jesus (and Dr. King) knew that one of the most common ways we deal with fear is to turn it into hate toward those we fear. But following the teaching of Jesus, Dr. King said there’s a better option. How can you more and more live into the God-given spirit of *agape* toward whatever frightening people and forces you face, big or small?

Prayer: O God, make me an instrument of your peace. Grow in me confidence in the long-term power of love, the world-changing power that makes me a follower of Jesus. Amen.

THURSDAY 5.9.19 Luke 9:51-56, John 4:4-10

Just knowing Jesus was going to Jerusalem led a Samaritan village to refuse to allow him to stay in their village. Jews hated Samaritans, a mixed race born of Assyria’s policy of wiping out the identity of conquered people. Samaritans hated Jews, who snubbed their offer to help rebuild the Temple. Each side’s fear of the other had hardened for 700 years. The Samaritan woman was astonished that Jesus would ask for something as simple as a drink of water—yet Jesus reached out to the Samaritans, again and again, rather than fearing or avoiding them.

What risks of misunderstanding, damage to reputation, rejection or rudeness existed for Jesus when he chose to engage the Samaritan woman in conversation at Jacob’s Well? What made him willing to take those risks in order to offer “living water” to a member of a different and despised race, and a disgraced woman at that? What does his model teach us about fearing people who are different?

Prayer: Lord Jesus, it’s true that “hurt people hurt people.” But you refused the path of fear and anger even when snubbed. Transform my heart to be more like yours each day. Amen.