

ENCOUNTERS: The Antidote to Fear

Scripture used: [Luke 22:54-62 \(NLT\)](#)

OVERVIEW

This week we began a new sermon series called Encounters. Pastor Hurmon wants us to understand one amazing fact: the God who created the universe wants us to have encounters with Him! He sent His Son Jesus so that we could approach Him. We should know God intimately, and feel the overwhelming love God has for us. This is how God mobilizes us. The challenge is that we tend to get closed off to God. We let other things get in the way, and our hearts and minds don't open. That is what Lent is all about. The 40 days that start this Wednesday give us an opportunity to open back up to a God who desperately wants to have encounters with us no matter what mistakes we've made. In [Mark 16:7 \(NIV\)](#), Jesus specifically called out to the same Peter who denied Jesus three times before He was crucified. Nothing you've done compares to that kind of betrayal, yet Jesus only cared about reconciling with him. That's the kind of God we serve, so let's open ourselves up to knowing Him more deeply!

KEY POINTS

1. **Jesus is desperately seeking encounters with each of us.** The potential to encounter God is not religious showmanship; encountering God really can change our lives. Mother Teresa had multiple encounters with God. At 12, 17, and 36 years old her faith was deepened and she was transformed. Her walk with God became more intimate, and her example became more inspiring to others around the world. God wants to encounter each of us the exact same way.
2. **Fear pushes us away from Jesus.** Fear is a dangerous thing. The Jewish leaders were afraid of Jesus because of His teachings, and so they had him put to death. Peter was afraid of being associated with Jesus, and so he denied even knowing his own rabbi after three years of living together. We are also tempted to let fear take over. Fear threatens our dreams. Fear holds us back from God's plans. And fear drives us to do unthinkable things.
3. **Encounters with Jesus are an antidote to our greatest fears.** Peter was known to be strong and courageous. He was one of the boldest of the disciples. He was even defensive when Jesus called him out during the Last Supper in [Luke 22:33-34 \(NLT\)](#). Despite what Peter thought at the time, fear conquered him easily when Jesus was arrested. He denied he knew Jesus three times before the rooster crowed, just as Jesus predicted. What was missing? He needed to encounter Jesus after being resurrected. Only then was Peter able to overcome his fears. The same Jesus desperately seeks an encounter with each of us as well. Peter had every right to be afraid. His life really was in danger! The difference between him and Jesus at that moment was simply that Jesus knew what was worth living – and dying – for. That death led to the resurrection and the fulfillment of scripture. Once Peter encountered the resurrected Jesus, his perspective on life and his prior fears dramatically changed. Now, we too can encounter the resurrected Jesus, and when we do so, we will know that nothing can separate us from the love of God. In Jesus we discover a life that cannot be destroyed, and a love that cannot be diminished.

DISCUSSION

- 1) **HEAR** - What were your childhood fears? Have you carried them into adulthood? If you outgrew your childhood fears, what was the process of outgrowing your fears like? How did your perspective change?
- 2) **UNDERSTAND** - Fear keeps us from living our best lives. Even after 3 years with Jesus, Peter was driven away by the fear of death. Encountering the risen Jesus changes us. It allows us to overwhelm our fears with a life that cannot be destroyed and a love that cannot be diminished. Consider this week's question as you prepare for Lent: "What is my greatest fear, and in what ways does it exercise power over my life?" Then, consider a childhood fear that you outgrew because your perspective changed. What if God wants you to outgrow your current fears, by changing your perspective as your relationship with Him grows and deepens? How do your fears change when you consider them in light of Jesus' resurrection?
- 3) **DO** - This Wednesday, March 9th we are starting our 40 days of prayer & fasting, which we're calling PF40. Pastor Hurmon challenged each of us to commit by affirming "I accept the PF40 challenge and look forward to receiving daily scripture emails from Pastor Hurmon!" Sign up now on our website or via the NBCC app. Designate a specific time and place when you'll connect with God, and think about the other people you want to pray for as we approach Easter.