

HAVE YOU HEARD? DO NOT BE AFRAID

Scripture used: [Luke 1:30 \(NLT\)](#)

OVERVIEW

“Don’t be afraid” is an extremely common phrase in the Bible. It is often tied to phrases such as “You have found favor with God” and “We are bringing good news to all the people.” Christmas is about knowing we are not alone, and conquering our fear. This is the gift and miracle of Christmas. We surrender to Christ, who has paid for our sins, so we don’t have to worry about our many imperfections and shortcomings. Fear, anxiety, and discouragement are a part of life; our task is to discern how to bring our fears to God and then to act with faith, wisdom, and in line with God’s good purpose for our lives.

KEY POINTS

1. Pastor Hurmon shared the story of a good friend who, while he was in hospice, received great encouragement from Psalm 23, where David’s declaration that “I will fear no evil” ([Psalm 23:4, NIV](#)) is possible because God declares that He is with us! Ultimately, the question we are called to consider is whether our fears reveal an invitation to say yes to a God-sized purpose for our life. This was God’s message to Mary and Joseph. They were regular people and found a God-sized purpose in the call to bear and raise Jesus. Mary took a huge risk - with her reputation and even her very life, in order to do what God was calling her to do. Because she was able to face her fears and act with courage, now every generation calls her blessed.
2. We should name and examine our fear. We “name it to tame it.” What kind of fear is it? Some fears are appropriate warnings and the proper response is to flee. Other fears need to be faced and we should confront them directly.
3. In our everyday lives, we long for safety, family, reputation, resources, and happiness. It’s the American dream, and perceived as a right. Yet it should not be our first priority. Making it into a first priority is dangerous. The pursuit of happiness can seduce us into idolatry, by becoming an idol we serve and worship above all else. God is the one who gives us meaning, purpose, true joy, and the legacy of a life well-lived. We must plug in to God’s purpose.
4. Pastor Hurmon told two personal stories. One, a friend of his, chose for his own “happiness” at the expense of his family, and the trauma that was caused was great. The other, a friend of Rhonda’s, walked with her husband through his drastic health challenges that changed his personality and his capabilities. She chose to be the embodiment of God’s grace, to stay married, and work through it and to stay true to her marital vows. We go through difficult seasons of challenges at work, caring for aging parents and kids, poor health, and other circumstances we can’t control. But there is always an ever-present invitation to serve God’s purpose. We don’t need to worry that we won’t get it perfectly right. We are called to face our fears, to not be afraid (not let fear control us); we can choose to be with God.
5. When we face our fears, we discover God’s peace, which is greater than human-made happiness ([John 14:27, NLT](#)). Pastor Hurmon’s grand-aunt, who raised him in Coushatta, Louisiana, was the embodiment of God’s mercy and grace. Pastor Hurmon saw in her a peace even through the frustrations of raising him, and he is eternally grateful for her demonstrating all year long the essential spirit of Christmas.

DISCUSSION

- 1) **HEAR** - Do you have a common (or uncommon) phobia? Spiders? Sharks? Public speaking? Is there an example in your life when you faced your fear? What was the outcome?
- 2) **UNDERSTAND** - Consider [Luke 1:26-38, NLT](#). What were some of the things that Mary could have been afraid of when the angel came to tell her that she was going to be the mother of Jesus? Has God ever given you a calling that has made you feel overwhelmed or fearful? How did you process your emotions? If you were able to face your fears, what allowed you to do that? If you said no to an opportunity because you were afraid, how do you think about that now? Remember that God is a God not just of a second chance, but of another chance. If God is calling you to a new opportunity to step into greater meaning or purpose, how would you want to face your fears?
- 3) **DO** - Join us for our Christmas Celebration this Thursday 12/22 in Redwood City at 7 PM, or this Friday 12/23 in San Jose at 7 PM, or in San Jose on Saturday, Christmas Eve 12/24 at 5 PM. We are also streaming our Gatherings online at all of those times! Invite your friends and family to an opportunity for them to experience God’s love this Christmas, whether in person or online. Remember, our Gatherings will be online only on Christmas Day 12/25, so our next in-person Gatherings after our Christmas Celebrations will be on Sunday, January 1 at 11 AM in Redwood City and San Jose.