

“When the Whole World Feels Frightening”

Psalm 46:1–3; Matthew 24:3–14, 36; Revelation 21:1–5
In the series “Fearless: Overcoming Fear with Faith”

A few years ago, many of us developed a habit we didn’t even realize we were forming.

Before our feet touched the floor in the morning, before coffee, before conversation, before prayer... we reached for our phones.

Or while we get ready for our day each morning, we turn on the TV or radio news.

And suddenly, before the day even started, the whole world was already in the room with us.

- War.
- Political conflict.
- Economic fears.
- Another shooting.
- Another disaster.
- Another warning about artificial intelligence.
- Another frightening prediction about the future.

And after a while, many people stopped just reading bad news.

They started living in a state of constant alertness.

Researchers are finding that anxiety and social fear have dramatically increased in recent years, especially among younger generations. Many people now describe feeling emotionally exhausted, chronically vigilant, and mentally overwhelmed. We carry a constant stream of crisis in our pockets all day long.

Fear is not only what we feel after bad news.

It is also what bad news can train us to become.

And maybe that’s why this final week of *Fearless* matters so much.

Because some fears are personal.

- Fear of failure.
- Fear of rejection.
- Fear of aging.
- Fear of death.

But some fears feel bigger than us.

- What happens to the world?
- What happens to our country?
- What happens to our children and grandchildren
- What kind of future are we handing to the next generation?

And the truth is: some of those fears are not irrational.

We live in an age of what some people call “apocalyptic anxiety.”

That sounds dramatic until you realize how many people quietly carry these fears every day.

People worry about:

- war,
- terrorism,
- economic instability,
- political division,
- social collapse,
- violence in public places,
- misinformation,
- environmental disasters,
- and whether anything feels stable anymore.

Even in Monroe, where ordinary life keeps moving—

- people still go to work,
- buy groceries,
- coach soccer and Little League,
- care for aging parents,
- attend graduations,
- show up at church—

there is still this background feeling sometimes that the world itself feels fragile.

And fear spreads quickly now.

Social media algorithms know that outrage and fear keep people engaged.

News cycles reward panic.

Political systems often thrive on making us afraid of each other.

Fear is no longer just an emotion.

It has become a social atmosphere.

And yet here's what I find remarkable:

the Bible was written into fearful times too.

Scripture was not written by people living easy, protected, stable lives.

It was written by people who knew war.

Exile.

Occupation.

Violence.

Political instability.

Economic uncertainty.

Persecution.

Loss.

And instead of pretending fear isn't real, the Bible speaks directly into it.

Psalm 46 begins this way: "God is our refuge and strength,

a very present help in trouble.

Therefore we will not fear..."

And then the psalm immediately imagines the worst.

- The earth gives way.
- Mountains fall into the sea.
- Waters roar.
- Nations rage.
- Kingdoms totter.

This is not a Hallmark card. This is not denial. This is not pretending everything is fine.

Psalm 46 was written by people who knew what it meant to feel the ground shaking underneath them.

And yet the repeated refrain throughout the psalm is this:

“The LORD Almighty is with us; the God of Jacob is our fortress.”

In other words, God is still here.

The psalm never denies catastrophe.

It denies catastrophe the final word.

That’s important.

Because Christian faith is not pretending the world is safe.

Christian faith is trusting that God remains present even when the world shakes.

A refuge does not prevent storms. A refuge protects you within them.

And then we come to Jesus in Matthew 24.

The disciples ask Jesus about the future. And Jesus does not give them comforting clichés.

- He talks about wars.
- Rumors of wars.
- Famines.
- Earthquakes.
- Betrayal.
- Hatred.

- Fear.

Jesus never says, “Nothing bad will happen.”

Instead, he says, “Do not be alarmed.”

Why? Because fear itself can become spiritually destructive.

Fear distorts people. Fear controls people. Fear trains people to panic.

And then Jesus uses this strange image.

He says these things are “the beginning of birth pains.”

Birth pains.

Painful? Yes.

Real? Absolutely.

Frightening? Sometimes.

But birth pains are not death pains.

They are pain moving toward new life. And that image changes everything.

Because Jesus is saying, the chaos of history is not meaningless. God is still working. God is still bringing forth life. God is still moving history somewhere.

And then Jesus says something else important: “About that day and hour no one knows...” Which means faithful Christians are not supposed to live trapped in panic, obsession, prediction games, or fear-driven religion.

Readiness is not panic.

Jesus does not call us to fearful speculation. Jesus calls us to faithful endurance.

Then Paul says this in Romans 8:

“I’m convinced that neither death nor life,

neither angels nor rulers,
 neither present things nor future things...
 will be able to separate us from the love of God..."

Notice what Paul does not say. Paul does not say frightening things are unreal.

Paul says they are not ultimate.

- Empires rise and fall.
- Economies rise and fall.
- Nations rise and fall.
- Human systems rise and fall.

But the love of God remains.

The headlines are loud. But the love of God is deeper.

And finally, Revelation 21 gives us the end of the story.

And I think this passage has often been misunderstood.

Revelation was not written to frighten frightened people even more.

It was written to give hope to frightened people.

John describes a new heaven, a new earth, God dwelling among humanity, tears wiped away, death no more, mourning no more, crying no more.

And then God says: "See, I am making all things new."

Not, "I am making all **new** things." ...

"I am making all things **new**."

Not abandoning creation, but redeeming creation.

Not escaping the world, but restoring the world.

The final word of scripture is not destruction.

It is restoration.

So what does this mean for us?

First, we need to stop feeding fear constantly. Some of us are consuming anxiety every hour of every day. And eventually, whatever shapes your imagination shapes your spirit. If the first voice discipling you every morning is fear, fear will eventually form you.

What if before headlines, we started with Psalm 46? Or Romans 8?

What if before outrage, we started with prayer? Instead of worrying about a world or community situation, start with prayer, and then look for ways to do something positive.

Second: we need practices that ground us. We call these things the means of grace, which are ways that we experience God's grace in our lives. Practices such as prayer and scripture reading, either individually or in community with others; receiving Holy Communion; worship; sharing life together in Christian community; serving others.

These are not religious decorations or busy work. They are practices that form resilient people. Fear loses some of its power when we stay connected to worship, community, and service.

Third, the church and Christians are called to become a non-anxious presence in an anxious world.

That doesn't mean we're naïve or detached or pretend problems aren't real.

We are called to be calm, compassionate, courageous, hopeful.

Fear spreads socially. But do you know what else does? Courage.

Do you know who reminds me of this? First responders. Hospital workers. Caregivers. Teachers. Church volunteers. Ordinary people who quietly keep loving and serving even when the world feels uncertain.

That is what faithful endurance looks like.

And finally, fearless disciples are not people who stop feeling afraid. They are people who decide that fear will not be the deepest truth shaping their lives.

Over these past five weeks we've talked about:

- fear of the future,
- fear of failure,
- fear of death,
- fear of the other,
- and fear of the end.

We've approached each of these topics with this framework for FEAR:

- **F - Face your fears with faith:** Lean into your fears with a bias of hope rather than running away. By stepping toward what you are afraid of, you take away its power over time.
- **E - Examine your assumptions in light of the facts:** Investigate your anxieties by fact-checking your thoughts. Look at real data rather than letting your imagination or worst-case scenarios dictate your emotional state.
- **A - Attack your anxieties with action:** Do something constructive to address the problem. Action diminishes the paralysis of fear, and taking practical steps gives you a sense of control.
- **R - Release and entrust to God:** Surrender your worries to God and trust God's strength to help put your worldly fears in perspective.

And every single week, scripture kept bringing us back to the same truth: Fear does not get the final word. God does.

Because the world does not need more fear. The world needs fearless people.

Not fearless because the world is safe. Fearless because God is faithful.

And so hear these words one more time:

**“God is our refuge and strength,
a very present help in trouble.**

Therefore we will not fear.”

(Read with me)

(Prayer)

Let us pray. Lord Jesus,

Over these weeks you have reminded us: fear does not get the final word. You do.

We will leave here and the world will still feel loud and uncertain. So we ask that what we have heard would take root — not just in our minds, but in our choices, our habits, and the way we face what frightens us. Make us, by your Spirit, into people whose lives look like good news.

We are not fearless because the world is safe. We are fearless because you are faithful. Let that be enough. Amen.