

Devotion: October 28, 2020- Fear

Halloween has always been a bit of a mixed bag in our household. It's not that I have any theological issue with Halloween; I have full trust in God, which for me means that I do not believe that one night of scary images is going to somehow unleash a wave of evil upon the world. I totally understand that not everybody gets excited about it and I myself am not particularly thrilled with the more gruesome elements, but I would never suggest that Halloween is somehow counter to our faith. In fact, at its root, a lot of the traditions of Halloween come from practises that were developed to scare away evil, not invite it in.

With all of that said though it's a mixed bag in our household because of the level of fear it produces in one of our sons. My son loves Halloween. He loves dressing up and in fact often has much more elaborate customs than our other two. He loves trick or treating; he loves getting all that delicious free candy. Yet he goes into that day and those actions very cautiously. Trick or treating with him is a lesson in patience. If a house has too many decorations, or not enough light, or just doesn't feel right, he will skip it all together. In fact, when he was younger, we skipped entire blocks because the street lights were not working. Many times, he has come home hours before his brothers and even though that often means he has less candy than they do, he is quite alright with that. Neither Stephanie, nor I, fault him for that at all. I am thrilled that he is able to listen to his gut and knows that when something feels uncomfortable that he can walk away. Yet seeing him panic at the sight of something unsettling or seeing him come home hours before his brothers reminds me of just how easily fear can overcome us all.

Honestly there have been many times in my life when I have been overcome with fear and often irrational fear; but even though it may be irrational, it still feels real. Without question the last months have included a number of fearful days for us all. I have heard countless people share with me how they have spent more time wondering what will be next or spent more time wondering how not to be afraid than they ever have before. There is a great phrase that I have been reminded of many times in the last eight months that says, "We fear those things we don't understand."

Now by no means am I perfect, I have fears that from time to time overcome me as well, but over the course of last eight months I have been reflecting a lot on the power that fear can have over us and what we can do in the face of those fears. My wife has a great way of calming our boys whenever they get really fearful of something; she simply says, "Let's pray to God about that." What I most like about those words that she shares with them is that they are deeply rooted in biblical truth. There are countless moments in scripture when people experience God, something that they do not fully understand or cannot fully grasp and so fear comes over them, but in the presence of that fear the words that are spoken to them begin with the statement, "Be not afraid." Those words, biblically speaking, have an incredible affect on people; it doesn't take away their fear, but it calms them and they hear more fully how God is working around them.

That is important to note. That when we are overcome with fear, we cannot hear, see or think clearly about the situation we are in; rather all we see, hear or feel is that which we are fearful of. My wife's statement to our son, "Let's pray to God about that," is a continuation of that biblical truth that tells us that no matter what we might be afraid of, no matter what we are feeling, we are not alone in it. Like the words, "Be not afraid," my wife's words, do not take away that which is scary, but rather they

enable a breath to be taken, a change of focus to occur and when that happens, we start to think and feel more carefully and see a way through that which moments ago had overwhelmed us.

What I have already seen in my son is how that promise can change one's life. That constant reminder of God presence with him and of his ability to turn to God in times of uncertainty and fear have made times like Halloween, for example, that much easier for him. Imagine how that will be of benefit to him later on when he faces other fears or concerns in his life; when times get tough, as they do for all of us. He will have this foundation to stand upon and help him to see, hear and feel through things with clarity.

It's the little things like that, tools for facing fears, that makes a life of faith really important; its also one of those unmeasurable and often over looked aspects of a life of faith; unless you experience it, its hard to explain. Now, by no means am I suggesting that if you have faith you will never have anything to fear; that is absurd. There is lots in our world and in our lives that causes fear. Rather a life of faith, guides us through the fear; gives us the tools to find clarity or vision when all is shadowed by uncertainty; it offers the light of hope and even the smallest flicker of hope can change everything around us.

Blessings to you all

Sincerely,

Rev. Adam Hall