



Empowering People to Change the World

Crisis, Creativity and Faith

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Matthew 12:1-14

Road Declaration:

I am growing to love Jesus with all of my heart, soul, mind, and strength

I am growing to love people the way Jesus loves them

I am building up my faith with God's Holy Word

I am coming alive in the power of the Holy Spirit

With Jesus, all things are possible

We are currently in a crisis, the likes of which we haven't seen before in our nation.

Liz and I have been exposed to the coronavirus and thus, I'm sharing from home this morning

- Covid-19, a worldwide pandemic, killing thousands and is a highly contagious virus.
- The country has recorded at least 24,000 deaths and over 580,000 worldwide so far during the pandemic, according to data from [Johns Hopkins University](#). All 50 states are under a federal disaster declaration for the first time in US history. Especially vulnerable are:
 - The immunocompromised.
 - The elderly.
 - Recent studies indicate diabetics, obese, and smokers are most vulnerable.
- In economics, we are systematically bankrupting our nation. Nothing like this has ever happened before.
- Every day another fearful release of new information.
- The next day's news contradicts the day before,
- What can you believe?

- Are you living in fear or faith? Are you living with joy or anxiety?
 - The media and our government have created fear in the populace.
- Crisis doesn't define the person, but it does reveal what's inside a person. As Jesus disciples we have literally nothing to fear.

Jesus said, “Do not fear those who kill the body but cannot kill the soul. But rather fear Him who is able to destroy both soul and body in hell. (Matthew 10:28)

- “Do not fear” is said 91 times in the Bible.
- That even means a virus! That even means the latest NY Times, CNN, or FOX News article.
- In the time of Jesus, the people lived in constant fear and anxiety.
- In our story, Jesus challenges a system set up by the Pharisees that has also created fear and control in Israel.
- Jesus came to break the power of fear and replace it with fear-cutting faith.

Jesus came as a Freedom Fighter, to bring breakthrough in fear, intimidation, and religious control.

Luke 4:18-19

***“The Spirit of the Lord is upon Me,
Because He has anointed Me
To preach the gospel to the poor;
He has sent Me to heal the brokenhearted,
To proclaim liberty to the captives
And recovery of sight to the blind,
To set at liberty those who are oppressed;
¹⁹ To proclaim the acceptable year of the Lord.”***

Jesus came to pick a fight with those who would reinterpret the Law to their own benefit

Today, I come to pick a fight with fear. For the Jesus follower:

- This can be our finest moment.
- This can be where we find out what's inside us.
- Crisis does not make the person, it reveals the person.
- Jesus picks a fight with the establishment.

Matthew 12:1-14

Jesus is setting up a scenario to challenge the fear, intimidation, and enslaving systems that the Pharisees had set up.

Jesus is saying that "I'm not a slave to the sabbath but the LORD of the sabbath."

- The Pharisees said you could do no work on the sabbath, not even eating grain when you're hungry.
- Yet they even contradicted the sabbath rule themselves.

You are to offer the second lamb at twilight, with the same kind of grain offering and drink offering as in the morning. It is an offering made by fire, a pleasing aroma to the LORD. This is the burnt offering for every Sabbath, in addition to the regular burnt offering and its drink offering....

(Numbers 28:9-10)

- Two lambs were killed on the Sabbath, in addition to the daily sacrifice. The priests must be engaged in killing them, and making fires to burn them in sacrifice, whereas to kindle a fire was expressly forbidden the Jews on the Sabbath, **Exodus 35:3** ("**Do not light a fire in any of your dwellings on the Sabbath day.**")
- They did that which, for other persons to do, would have been "profaning" the Sabbath. Yet they were blameless. They did what was

necessary and commanded. This was done in the very temple too, the place of holiness, where the law should be most strictly observed.

- Yet the Law did allow the disciples to eat grain picked on the Sabbath in Deuteronomy 23:5.

Jesus is proclaiming that HE is the LORD of the sabbath and came to bring freedom to all who are enslaved by fear and any form of intimidation.

- Fear is a human emotion that is triggered by a perceived threat. It is a basic survival mechanism that signals our bodies to respond to danger with a fight or flight response. As such, it is an essential part of keeping us safe.
- However, when people live in constant fear, whether from physical dangers in their environment or threats they perceive, they can become incapacitated.

Fear Enslaves You: 4 Characteristics

1. Fear closes off your mind from all creativity and enslaves your thinking.
2. Fear creates passivity and paralyzes our actions.
3. Fear impacts you physically. A recent article from the University of Minnesota, “Fear weakens our immune system and can cause cardiovascular damage, gastrointestinal problems such as ulcers and irritable bowel syndrome, and decreased fertility. It can lead to accelerated aging and even premature death.”
4. In the same article, scientists have found fear can impair formation of long-term memories, decision making, and cause damage to certain parts of the brain, such as the hippocampus.

Jesus came to set the captives free! Jesus came to replace our fears with faith.

Proverbs 28:1

***The wicked flee when no one pursues,
But the righteous are bold as a lion.***

**It is in a time of crisis that God raises up our faith to be bold as a lion!
Jesus is modeling faith in the midst of fear.**

Bold Lion-like Faith: 4 Characteristics

1. Bold Faith is always based on knowledge—there is no such thing in the Christian life for “blind faith.” We who are Word and Spirit Christians believe in faith based on our knowledge of Jesus Christ and His Word. ***“Faith comes by hearing and hearing by the Word of God.” (Romans 10:17)***
2. Bold Faith opens up your mind to new creativity and innovative thoughts. Faith awakens your imagination!
3. Bold Faith releases hormones that strengthen your immune system. That’s why people of faith are healthier than those who live in fear.
4. Bold Faith always seeks truth and truth sets us free! Faith is never intimidated by knowledge—“you shall know the truth and the truth sets you free.”

Matthew 12:7

7 But if you had known what this means, ‘I desire mercy and not sacrifice,’ you would not have condemned the guiltless.

- The Rabbis analyzed the Law and found 613 precepts.
- These are reduced to 11 principles in Psalm 15.
- Then down to 6 commands in Isaiah 33:15.
- Then we have Micah 6:8 narrowing it to 3 requirements.
- And Jesus now reduces it to very close to the Great Commandment: “I desire mercy.”
- Jesus is saying that when we show mercy to others, we are fulfilling the Law.
- And then He shows us how this looks.

Matthew 12:9-14

⁹Now when He had departed from there, He went into their synagogue.

¹⁰ And behold, there was a man who had a withered hand. And they asked Him, saying, “Is it lawful to heal on the Sabbath?”—that they might accuse Him.¹¹ Then He said to them, “What man is there among you who has one sheep, and if it falls into a pit on the Sabbath, will not lay hold of it and lift it out? ¹²Of how much more value then is a man than a sheep? Therefore it is lawful to do good on the Sabbath.”

¹³ Then He said to the man, “Stretch out your hand.” And he stretched it out, and it was restored as whole as the other. ¹⁴ Then the Pharisees went out and plotted against Him, how they might destroy Him.

- The best way to break off fear is to reach out to people in greater need than yourself!
- Church, reach out. Make that call to someone in need. Grab groceries for someone.
- Liz and I intentionally exposed ourselves to Covid19. We wanted to get the virus and develop the antibodies and immune system so we can go in and minister to the sick and dying!
- We have our son-in-law ministering in the Emergency Rooms of three hospitals in Denver.
- We just sent off our son and daughter-in-law to NY to minister in the epicenter of the epicenter in Manhattan.
- Be bold as a lion! Don't let fear grip you, grip it! Grip fear and suffocate it.

For whatever is born of God overcomes the world. And this is the victory that has overcome the world — our faith.

“Be strong and of good courage; do not be afraid, nor be dismayed, for the Lord your God is with you wherever you go.” (Joshua 1:9)

Church, let us be the kind of persons, not unlike the Good Samaritan, where we face the problems and pain of others; reach out with a

**helping hand, overcoming our own fears, in order to BE the CHURCH
in a world starving for love and compassion.**

Mercy triumphs over judgement!