

# Sermon Outline

THE YEAR OF OUR LORD, 2013-2014

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## AN END TO FEAR

(ISAIAH 53:5-6)

### I. Emotionless?

- A. About two years ago, the Gallup Poll released the results of a survey on our society. The impression that emerged was that our society was rather *emotionless*.<sup>1</sup> We were ranked the “least emotional” or else the “most emotionless” country in the world.
- B. We were taught to rein in our emotions and subject them to higher concerns, such as...
  - Survival
  - Concern for the comforts of others with whom we live
  - Our prevailing culture’s norms for personal dignity
- C. But is it entirely true that there are very little emotions on display in our society? It seems that the kinds of emotions that we see on display, perhaps a little too often, are *fear*, *irritability*, and *anger*.
- D. The root emotion that leads to those other emotions is *fear*.
- E. How long can a society run on the fumes of fear? How long can we be driven by anger or defensiveness before we eventually snap?

### II. A Lifelong Slavery

- A. Before we discuss how we can begin to overcome our fear-ruled lives, we have to recognize that our fears, even the most irrational ones, actually have a basis in something real.
  - 1. On the one hand, living by fear is not a healthy thing.
  - 2. On the other hand, there is a good reason to fear—our fears are not based entirely in illusion or an overinflated sense of danger.
- B. The Bible has much to teach us. Hebrews 2:15: “and deliver all those who through fear of death were subject to lifelong slavery.”
- C. The fear of death is the root fear behind all our other fears. Because we fear death...
  - 1. We want to make sure that everything in life is properly lined up for us.
  - 2. We want to make sure that our choices lead us to the most happiness.
  - 3. We are afraid of people who threaten our hope for happiness, our sense of security, and even our desire of certainty.
  - 4. We become angry and defensive when we perceive those desires to be hindered.
- D. While it is unhealthy to live with fear, the sacred Scriptures teaches that all our fears, whether rational or irrational, are rooted in something real. And that is death.
- E. This slavery to fear of death can manifest itself in all kinds of ways.
  - An obsessive desire to be right all the time
  - Inability to handle any sort of criticism
  - Fear of taking risks
  - Laziness
  - Defensiveness and anger

### III. Apart from God

- A. How did death come about?

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<sup>1</sup> <http://www.gallup.com/poll/158882/singapore-ranks-least-emotional-country-world.aspx>

- B. The Bible teaches that the human race was not a product of chance, but of God’s intentional design.
- C. God meant for the human race to function as his image, his representatives, in the world (Gen 1:26).
- D. Instead of serving God and sticking to the path he had defined for us, mankind chose to go their own way and seek independence from God.  
—The parents of the human race, Adam and Eve, chose the path of autonomy and independence from God.
- E. The problem with that decision was that man was never made to function independently of God.
  1. Since God is eternal and indestructible life, life apart from God is not life at all.  
—It is a slow and eventual death, moving from physical decay in this life to the eternal separation of one’s soul from life after physical death has happened.
  2. Since God is also the source of all goodness, life apart from God is therefore a life that gradually ceases to be good.
  3. You and I were not made to live apart from God, because the very opposite of God is not freedom, but slavery. It is slavery to evil. It is slavery to death.
- F. This why the fear of death, though hateful and slavish, is completely understandable and rational. We live in deep dread of death because death was what we inherited from our first parents, when they made a fatal decision to turn away from the Creator and choose to live their lives apart from him.

#### **IV. Habits of Death**

- A. Ever since Adam and Eve chose autonomy from God—i.e., the way of death—their children continue to walk autonomously from God as well.  
—We too walk in the ways of death. The Bible calls this “sin” or “transgressions.”
- B. Sin is basically a lack of conformity to God’s intentions. Sin is when we disobey the instructions that God our Creator has given to us.
- C. While God has given us many instructions, the two main ones are (1) that we love God above all things and (2) that we love our fellow human beings as we love ourselves.
  1. When we do not love God first, we have no standard for righteousness.
  2. When we do not love our fellow human beings as we love ourselves, we will begin to use them for our own pleasure. We will exploit one another.
- D. Thus, as much as we fear death, we also live according to its rule.

#### **V. Death-defying God**

- A. Psalm 29:10 declares, “The Lord sits enthroned over the flood; the Lord sits enthroned as king forever.”
- B. Even when the floods of death threaten to engulf us, God himself is not dislodged from his throne. The sacred heart of Life can never himself be destroyed.
- C. The best part of it all is that this God has a plan to bring his lost creation back into the gravitational field of his life once again.
- D. But to do this, God himself has to address the evil that we have done to him and to one another. God has to remove our sins from the equation so that we can live once again. In other words, justice must be served before mercy can be extended.
- E. In his good timing, God sends his Servant to take our sins upon himself so that we do not have to die for our sins ever again.
- F. Isaiah 53:5-6 tells us about what this Servant of God has undergone for us.
  1. In verse 5, we are told what the Servant of God has undergone for us.

2. Verse 6 has two parts.
  - a. In the first part, it describes what we have done.
  - b. In the second part, it describes what God has done to save us from our sins and bring us back to himself.

## VI. Gone Astray

- A. First, the passage says that “All we like sheep have gone astray; we have turned—every one—to his own way...”
- B. This basically describes what we were talking about earlier. Instead of following God, we chose to follow our own paths, which lead to death in all its manifestations.

## VII. Sin-Bearing Servant

- A. But God wants to bring us back into the orbit of his holy life.
- B. The divine solution to the great human problem of sin, death, and fear really comes down to this: “and the LORD has laid on him the iniquity of us all.”
- C. The “him” in this passage refers to the Lord Jesus Christ, the Son of God, who died on the cross on the first Good Friday.
  1. The idea here is that instead of having us die for our sins, God had Jesus take our sins upon himself so that instead of us dying the final and eternal death of hell, Jesus himself takes that death upon himself—so allowing us to live and to return to God once again.
- D. This notion of the Son of God dying for our sins is found all throughout this chapter of Isaiah.

*<sup>5</sup> But he was pierced for our transgressions;  
 he was crushed for our iniquities;  
 upon him was the chastisement that brought us peace,  
 and with his wounds we are healed (Isaiah 53:5)*

*By oppression and judgment he was taken away;  
 and as for his generation, who considered  
 that he was cut off out of the land of the living,  
 stricken for the transgression of my people? (Isaiah 53:8)*

*<sup>12</sup> Therefore I will divide him a portion with the many,  
 and he shall divide the spoil with the strong,  
 because he poured out his soul to death  
 and was numbered with the transgressors;  
 yet he bore the sin of many,  
 and makes intercession for the transgressors. (Isaiah 53:12)*

- E. On Good Friday, we are commemorating precisely this event—when God himself acted in space and time to judge, punish, and destroy all the sins of his people once and for all in the body of Jesus Christ.
- F. In doing so, God frees us from death and from having to live our lives out of fear all the time.

*Since therefore the children share in flesh and blood, he himself likewise partook of the same things, that through death he might destroy the one who has the power of death, that is, the devil, and deliver all those who through fear of death were subject to lifelong slavery. (Hebrews 2:14, 15)*

- G. By taking our death, entering into our death, Jesus has done what we could not do. He has destroyed the one who has the power of death, the dark spiritual power called the devil; and from there, he has freed us from death. He has made it possible for us to live, no longer out of fear, but out of life and out of joy.

## VIII. The Rule of Life

- A. How do we escape the old powers and enter into the orbit of God's life?  
B. As we have seen in the passages in Isaiah, it is not so much what we do but what has been done for us already. Jesus Christ has taken all our sins upon himself and he has taken into himself the full scope of punishment that we deserve.  
C. So he is the hero of the story, not us. We do not save ourselves. The only thing we can do is to come and cast ourselves upon Jesus and allow him to save us; allow his death to be the complete punishment of our sins.

*For God so loved the world, that he gave his only Son, that whoever believes in him should not perish but have eternal life. For God did not send his Son into the world to condemn the world, but in order that the world might be saved through him. (John 3:16)*

- D. After we have believed in Jesus, entrusted our whole lives to him, we come under a new regime.  
1. We come under the cleansing and healing power of the death of Jesus Christ.  
2. We come under the fierce, irresistible gravitational pull of God's own life.  
E. Suddenly, we discover a new way of living that we may have never contemplated before.  
1. Instead of living solely to preserve ourselves, we are now free to live for the One who is bigger than ourselves, the life-giving God himself.  
2. Instead of living in pursuit of our narrow ambitions, we are free to become what God has always wanted us to be—his image in the world, wherever we are, wherever he may call us.

**The death of the Son of God, the Lord Jesus Christ, has brought about an end to fear, because it has brought about the end of death. This does not mean, of course, that living in freedom from fear comes easily or automatically. It doesn't. Christians, like any other groups of people, struggle with fear. But in Jesus Christ, we have a real and objective reason not to fear anymore. If we have put our faith in Jesus Christ, not only can we not fear anymore; but we *must* no longer fear. Because you and I are under the rule of God's eternal life, there is now an obligation to resist fear and live in the freedom that Christ has won for us. And out of that freedom comes "love, joy, peace, patience, kindness, goodness, faithfulness, gentleness, self-control" (Gal 5:22, 23)—the very virtues that will heal the pains of the human race. The end to fear has arrived. Let us now live in the new day that God has made through Jesus Christ.**

*Lord Jesus Christ,  
you are the gift of God's love to your people.  
You alone are the hope of life for this world.  
The Lord laid upon you the iniquities of us all.  
And so you died on the cross as an offering for our sins.  
And three days later, the Lord freed you from death and raised you from the dead to be our King,  
and the Ruler of the heavens and the earth.  
Lord Jesus, we are drowning in our sins and we have no Savior but you.  
We cast our whole lives upon you.  
We trust in you alone for the forgiveness of our sins.  
We rest in you alone for the salvation of our souls.  
Save us, Lord Jesus Christ.*