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Light Eliminates Fear

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Well, Nina and I thought it would be fun to take the kids out to the country for a little overnight and so we went down to central Virginia. And you know when you have kids from the city that all the simplicities of the country are an adventure, right? And so we were at nighttime and the kids were getting restless and so I called the girls over to me and I said; 'girls, let's do something we could never do in the city'. They said, 'yeah, okay.' So, I said, 'here's what we're going to do; we're all going to go on a night walk in the woods. And so, the kids got excited.

And so I want to do something; I want to set the atmosphere today and I want to invoke the senses and I want to invite you just on a short walk with us. Alright? So, you're going to join us right now. So, I'll set the stage and we walked outside the house and they're these bright, bold floodlights that are outside the house that illuminates everything immediately so you can see it. So we started out on the gravel path and you could actually hear the gravel underneath our feet. And one of the girls as we sat outside said: "Dad, this is just a walk, this is not scary". I said; "so, well let's keep going". And so about 35, 40 feet later, Renzi, my little seven year old, she said, "Ella, we're not scared, but we're kind of scared, right?" And they all said, "Dad, this is actually getting a little bit scary. Like what are we doing here?" So we just kept going about 20, 25 feet later, both the girls said, "Dad, this is not good. We have to go back now. This is getting really scary." And, I said, "okay girls, we can either go back or we can do something different. We can adventure and we can keep going. We can press on." So, we pressed on. 15 feet later, I had a death grip on my arm and my leg on both sides and I couldn't actually feel my leg because there was no pressure, there was no blood flow left in my leg, and it got to that point and I just stopped right there, and I realized I had accidentally backed into a teaching moment. And so I said, "girls, why is this so scary?" And the girls said, "Dad, because we can't see anything. We don't know what's out there. We don't know what could get us. We don't know, we're scared, Dad." I said, "You know what? Isn't that great to be with your dad though? You don't have to be scared because you're holding on to your dad." Then I said, "the very beginning of Genesis, the beginning of time, the scriptures say that there was darkness and the world would was formless and void. And then God said something. He said, let there be light; and there was light." And immediately with that light, a lot of fears from the girls just subsided. So I just did something, I just did this. "RAH". I didn't actually do that, but I have done that in the past. I'm sorry, Ella, we won't tell that story because I'm a good dad usually. But in that moment, fears subsided and here's the thing, the circumstances, the situation around us didn't change, but the mere presence of light changed everything within us. And I noticed something along the way though that they actually huddled in closer to the light but I noticed this, they didn't let go of their dad even when some of that fear subsided, they didn't let go of me because they understood that it's good to be around the light, but at the end of the day, you have to be connected to the light to be ultimately safe and secure. And it was this wonderful little moments, and so we started walking back and I left the light on for them, not for myself, not because it was coyote country, I wasn't scared of anything, it was for the girls, right? And we got back and we overcame our fears. This is my

team right here, I love these girls. Good job girls. Love you, Renzi. Chicago Bears right there, didn't plan that God is good though, good year.

Here's the thing, darkness can have an amazing effect on our minds, can't it? But Psalm 27, the psalmist says,

*"The LORD is my light and my salvation whom shall I fear? The LORD is the stronghold of my life of whom shall I be afraid?"*

And so God in our moments today may fear subside and may faith fill our spirits today. In Jesus' name we pray, Amen.

We continue our 'Let There Be Light' series today. And last week Pastor Mark talked about light at creation and he spoke hope into us. He said it's often darkest before the dawn, and he said that dawn is coming. And he breathed hope into us, if you will. Well, today we're going to talk about the light that eliminates fear, and I just read the beginning portion of our texts it's in Psalm 27 and we're just going to walk through this verse by verse. We're going to get through four verses today, and so we're just going to go ahead and dive in.

*"The LORD is my light and my salvation whom shall I fear? The LORD is the stronghold of my life of whom shall I be afraid?"*

God doesn't just give us a flashlight, does he? He doesn't just give us a flash of light. No. God created light. God is light. He says, Jesus says in John 8:12, he says,

*"I am the light of the world. Whoever follows me will never walk in darkness, but will have the light of life."*

Jesus makes this declaration during the Feast of Tabernacles and it's celebrated in the temple in Jerusalem. So what would happen is they would light for different lamp stands four candelabras and they would raise them up to about 75 feet in the temple courts. And the temple was up on this hill and it overlooks the city, so, throughout the city of Jerusalem, during the feast, you would look up and you would see these lights and people would celebrate and they would dance in the streets because of the deliverance that they received from Egypt. And so this is the context, this is the background, the backdrop that Jesus chose to make this 'I am' statement; I am the light of the world. And he speaks this and he's not saying I am a national savior for Israel. No, he's speaking broader than that. I am the light for all who are in darkness. Anybody who lives in the darkness of fear, the darkness of failure, that darkness, a selfishness, those different places where we find ourselves in the dark. He says, I have come exactly for you, and he comes for all who believe in him. And that's what happens, that the people that are in his path step into the light. There's the woman who has five different husbands at the well, remember, she steps into light and she finds salvation. There's the tax collector who comes along and steps into the light and Zacchaeus, he says, I will go and repay every person that I ripped off four times the amount that I took from them. There's the disciples who stepped into the light and they go from being fishermen to being apostles. And this is what happens when you step into the light. We might not realize this, but the light of Christ can make you the person that you never realized you were

made to be. And that light is available for every single one of us. It's an invitation. It's not an annoying coercion from the king. No. It's a loving and deep invitation to our souls.

But notice in Psalm 27, it doesn't say... the Psalmist doesn't say the Lord is A light. He doesn't say like in 1 John 1:5 that God is light. No. What does he say? He says the Lord is **my** light; he is my salvation. Just because you're aware of light doesn't mean that you choose to live in the light. It's the difference between the grass underneath my deck and the grass outside of my deck. The former is in the light every single day that grass is in the light and so there's a different fullness to that grass than what's underneath. There's a different growth. There's a different health. There is life that comes through the light because of the exposure of daily light into that grass so it lives full and it receives color and warmth and it comes to life through that light.

There are studies on light intervention, essentially concluding that light reduces the activities in the brain's fear element. If people are exposed to wavelengths of daylight, they become better at coping with anxiety provoking experiences. The Lord is my light. He is my salvation, whom shall I fear? Darkness can cause incredible fear in us can't it? Regardless of the situation or the reality or the truth our mind starts to play tricks on us, doesn't it? There's actually a name, there's a category for this and it's called the Ganzfeld effect. In the 1930's, a psychologist by the name of Wolfgang Metzger did research that established that when people gazed into a featureless field of vision, they consistently hallucinated; they saw things that weren't actually there. There were noticeable changes in the brain EEG readings and Metzger, he claimed the phenomena was the result of the brain's search for the missing sensory stimuli and resulted in amplified neural noise. In other words, when you don't feed your brain with information with visual information that it is used to, it starts to fill in the gaps and it fills in the gaps in a way that it results that our brain actually can't then tell the difference between reality and possibility. Hence, it's why when we close our eyes for six or seven hours at night, we start to dream, right? And we step into is that reality or is that possibility? And our brain has a hard time understanding.

Has your mind ever played tricks on you in the dark or in the night? I remember as a kid, when you were the last one to go up to bed in our house; you are responsible to turn all the lights off, right? And so I wonder if somebody can relate to me because as a kid and you know when you turn off the last light, that's when the burglar, the demon, the devil, the boogeyman, that's when they're all waiting in the recess is just to jump on you and attack you, right? And so you would do this thing and you would turn all the lights off except for the last light switch that was closest to the stairs, right? Anybody with me, am I alone on this one, okay? And then you wouldn't just turn it off, but you would like, you would do the, you know, the, {stretched as far as he could} it's as close as you can get and then you flip it and you would run and you take off. And you know, I did a 4 3:40 yard dash up those stairs so fast, like the end of the world was coming. And then as soon as you hit upstairs here in the hall light, you just slow down your back cool again, because your brothers and sisters are all around. You don't know if they're going to see you, right? Nothing to see here but then you do one of these {turned his head to look behind him}. You know what I'm talking about because you don't know if the boogie demon man followed you up with a sickle about ready to take your arm off, right? And you got to check.

There are these irrational fears that we have just because of darkness. And they kinda grip us, they get inside of us. No, a fear of the dark is really just the fear of the unknown, isn't it? What

we don't know, and so we see that same fear can manifest itself in a lot of different situations. It can manifest itself when you're sitting in the doctor's office and he shares the results of the test and you don't know what he's talking about and that fear of the unknown starts to grip your heart. Or could be in the process of that seed of doubt that you now have about that someone or that something that before you felt so sure about, but that's not there anymore. Or maybe it's wondering if you'll ever be able to work through that failure, or that challenge or that addiction in your life. Or maybe it's just a fear of the future, you don't know where you're going, you don't know what direction or path that you're on and so this fear gets in us, doesn't it? And it starts to grip our hearts. The absence of certainty can be terrifying. Fear rains gloriously in the dark.

Well, we can take a possibility and we can turn it into a personal reality just because of the fear and that darkness us and it can dominate our faith and sap plus of our peace. But Jesus came, Jesus came, Jesus came and he came in the darkest didn't he? And then the dawn showed up and Jesus came and he didn't just bring some light for us, he came as lights. And he came and he gave us vision and vision not that comes through the light of our circumstances, no vision that comes through the light of Christ, through the light of the Kingdom of God that changes our reality, it changes our hearts, it changes the peace within our soul.

Verse two, *"When the wicked advance against me to devour me, it is my enemies and my foes who will stumble and fall. Though an army besiege me, my heart will not fear; though war break out against me, even then I will be confident. when the wicked advance against me to devour me,"*

The Psalm is written in the myths of darkness. We're not exactly sure the time period in David's life, there's different opinions, but we know just from the context or the content within this passage that we know that he's lost his father and mother. We know that he's being chased down. We know that the enemy is imminent. We know he has been slandered. We know that David is in the midst of darkness. He's got plenty to be afraid of and he has every excuse to have fear within his heart because at nighttime he looks out and he sees all the campfires of the people who are waiting to search him out and kill him. Fear is a reality for David.

Now, there are two kinds of fears. There are, there are illegitimate fears like I just talked about; these fears that we have in the dark and something might happen. And then there are legitimate fears that we have. I would be afraid if I was in David's circumstances, wouldn't you? Everything around you is just waiting to take you out; waiting to come against you, the fear was quite real. But faith, it lives in the neighborhood of fear, but it's not a part of the neighborhood association. It doesn't abide by the same rules of the neighborhood, but they do coexist, don't they? Do we have an improper understanding or expectation that fear should not exist if faith does? Even when I turned on the light out in the woods, the girls were still afraid weren't they? They still had fear in their hearts, but when the girls focused on their father peace ruled over panic. Faith doesn't eliminate fear; it just focuses less on the fear and more on the father.

I'm not here today to say that you don't face a big giant. I'm not here today to say that you don't have a large adversary. I'm not here today that say that you don't have problems, that you don't have challenges, that you don't have fears in front. I'm not here to say that today, but I'm here to say that God is bigger than your problems. I'm here today to say to you that God is bigger than

your challenges, that God can overcome your anxieties, that God can overcome your issues, that God can fill in the gaps of your lack of it is not the lack of an adversary, but it is the presence of a king that gives us confidence, that builds our spirit, that builds us up. It's not my limited ability, but it's God's capability. Don't be dominated by fear. Fear can exist and it can remain, but God elevates us above that fear. Fear that soars is faith and a faith that sinks is fear. Light exposes fake fears, it helps us name them, it helps us expose them, it helps us delete them, it helps us release them, right? That's what happens. But you know what light also does. It exposes fears that are legitimate, doesn't it? Like what if you turned the light on and the boogeyman is there? No, I'm just kidding. But what if the light comes on and whatever that fear becomes a reality and you see a legitimate fear in front of you. That's when we what? That's when we refocus on the father. Fears can remain, but when we focus on the father, we understand that God is bigger than every illegitimate and every legitimate fear and need. And he not us, he within us overcomes those fears. The Lord is **my** light. He is **my** salvation. Power is in the personal pronoun. When he is within our souls, we confess his word and we confess his goodness.

Verse four...

*"One thing I ask from the LORD, this only do I seek: that I may dwell in the house of the LORD all the days of my life, to gaze on the beauty of the LORD and to seek him in his temple."*

David's public confidence in the Lord; it comes because of his private communion with God. David knew what it was to wait on the Lord. He knew what it was to humble himself before God. He knew what it was to have hurt knees because he had been spending some time on his knees in prayer. He knew what it was to have a sore hand because he had been writing so much about the goodness and the faithfulness of God. David knew what it was to get in the presence of the Lord. Fear often takes deep root when we get distracted from the Lord, doesn't it? The word worry comes from the old English term 'wyrgan' which means to choke or to strangle. And that's what happens; fear strangles our mind, doesn't it? When fear gets into you, you can't live in a rational state. You can't live focusing or doing what you need to do because it just begins to strangle out everything within us. You ever noticed that when an angel shows up in the scripture, what's the first thing he says? He says, "Fear not", right? "Fear not." Why does he say that? Probably because an angel just showed up in front of you and it's scary, right? But maybe it's also because the angel knows that when somebody is gripped by fear, they can't hear what God wants to say. Somebody here needs to hear that word right there. That God is trying to say something to your soul, but we've allowed fear to grip us so much that we can't focus on what he wants to say, what he wants to give, what he has called us to receive.

One thing I've been so impressed with from my mom over the years is that even when she faces tough circumstances and situation and when she goes into a rough season of life and she's not perfect, but I've seen this, that she is faithful every time to get in the word, to get in the scriptures. When it's going rough, she will dive into the scriptures and not get out until she has received the goodness and the presence of God in her own heart. She's relentless to go after God in these seasons. She won't let go until he drops a word in her spirit. She grabs a hold of the Lord and it doesn't change her fear, you guys. Is that disappointing? I think it can be. Oh, I thought if you step into prayer, you step into God that your fears will just be gone. It doesn't change your fears, but it elevates her faith over her fears. That's what God does in us.

Where have you allowed your mind to dwell this past week? Where have we allowed our thoughts to recur over and over? Are we dwelling in the house of God? Are we dwelling in the presence of the Lord? Are we dwelling on that fear or that issue or that challenge? Dwell in the presence of the Lord and he changes us and turns us and gives us his peace.

When I first came to Washington DC, I came to give a year of my life working with and working alongside Dr Foth and it was an amazing year. And man, I'm so indebted to him and just grateful for all that he's done and his friendship to me. But I remember one of the gifts of that year, one of the joys that that year was meeting a guy named Charlie White and he was a former navy submarine captain. He was a chief of staff for a local congressman. And I met him in the last chapter of his life and it was getting rough, but he started a relationship of faith with Christ in that season and so the three of us would sit down and we'd talk about life, we'd talk about death, we'd talk about faith, talk about fear, and I got to know him. My friendship started with him when I would drive him back and forth from his house to the hospital, from his house to the clinic and I'd help pick him up and take him from his bed to the car, from his car to the room and back and forth, and this is how we got to know each other. And Charlie in many ways at many times was gripped by fear. And so he would often ask this question. He would ask; how much faith is enough? And I remember one day he asked that question in Dr Foth said this, he said, "you know, Jesus talks about this, and he says, you are to have faith the size of what? The size of a mustard seed. Mustard seed is about as small as you can get. And then he said this; he said something that my dad used to say growing up. He said, 'you know you don't need to measure faith, you just need to exercise it.' So, just like you're sitting in your chair today he said, 'you're not measuring how much you want to trust your chair. You're just exercising a trust that that chair is going to hold you up and you're just leaning into that.' And that's what we're called in this element of faith over fear.

That's what it says in Matthew Chapter 11 verse 28. Jesus says, "*Come to me, all you who are weary and burdened, and I will give you rest.*"

We think of that scripture is just a comfort scripture, don't we? But is it actually a call to faith, a call to put our trust in Christ that somebody who has burdens that are overtaking you, that God, today's giving you an invitation to come and just lean into me. I know the fear level is high, but come and put your faith into me, come and rest in me. And our friend Charlie he leaned in to Christ and when he did, you know what? He was still scared of cancer and it didn't mean that death wasn't imminent, didn't mean that that disease wasn't wasting away his body. But when Charlie called on the name of the Lord, he found that God his father became greater than his fears and when he focused on the father, his love for his wife became greater and his perspective became different. And I remember his wife used to shoo the kids away because he was always annoyed by how loud they would get. And one day we were sitting and he said, you know what? I've learned something. I've realized that actually the, the sound and the noise of children playing is one of the most beautiful sounds of joy in the entire world. And that's what was happening and Charlie, when he focused on the father; it changed everything around him and in him. The circumstances were the same, but he was not, his life was not. When Charlie focused on the father his burden became light, his footing became sure, his heart became full and his fear became faith.

So God, we thank you today for the encouragement of your word and I pray today, God that we wouldn't just be around the light. In this house, we look around and we see people worshiping and raising their hands and maybe praying and we are around the light of Christ, but I pray today for every person in the house today, that it wouldn't just be **a** light or **the** light, but that we would call unto you Christ as our light. The Lord is **my** light, he is **my** salvation, whom shall I fear? So, we call on the name of the Lord today. I pray for those of us who are here today and you need to take a step into the light.

In just a moment we're going to sing a song together and at our different locations we have prayer partners, we have prayer team that would love to pray with you, but if you need to take a step into the light today, I want to encourage you, choose faith over fear today. Some of us are just, our souls are gripped by fear within our hearts and we're following Christ, but you know what? We've allowed the tide of fear to rise over faith and we need to step out and receive Christ in a renewed capacity today. Just stand up today and step towards him and worship him in full measure today and may fear subside as faith grows up. And so I just pray a simple prayer over the house today, over every person that by faith receives Christ within their heart and believes upon Jesus as their Lord and Savior. And so God, I bless them today. In the name of the father, of the son and of the Holy Spirit. Amen.