

INTRODUCTION

We will never again be the same after the attack against our nation on Tuesday, September 11. Like the pictures of the burning ships in Pearl Harbor or the video of the Space Shuttle *Challenger* exploding into smoke, the scene of civilian jets slamming into the World Trade Towers will be forever engraved upon our collective minds. Who can forget the sight of those two massive twin towers crumbling to the earth? And all this destruction is the result of the religious hatred of a few murderous fanatics. Never have so few created so much chaos and pain as did those nineteen terrorists. America has been knocked down, but don't count her out yet. The terrorists have only stirred up a hornet's nest of righteous indignation. Like our Lord Jesus who suffered unimaginable pain and agony, I believe our nation will experience a resurrection of hope and a rebirth of Godly, moral values. If we seek God's face, I am convinced we will rise from the ashes and will once again stand as one nation under God.

This morning, all across America, millions of people are gathered in houses of worship to pray for our President and other leaders to have the wisdom to respond decisively to this heinous act of war. We are also asking God to comfort the hearts of those who lost family members and friends in this disaster. We must also pray for the rescue workers who are laboring at this moment to search for survivors and casualties.

We must face the fact all our lives have been changed by this act of terrorism. All of us are going to pray a little harder when we get on our next airliner. Our feeling of security of living in fortress America has been shaken. This new 21st century kind of warfare won't resemble World War II, or Vietnam, or the Gulf War. All of America's military conflicts since the Civil War have been fought in foreign countries, but this war already has a battle line drawn on American soil. It's hard to predict when this war will end, and we must be prepared to see further attacks against American civilians—that's the nature of terrorism. So whether we like it or not, even for those of us who live behind the safety of the pine curtain of East Texas, our lives are going to be different.

So, how are we going to react or respond? We are all shocked and saddened and some people are angry as well. But the one emotion I want to speak to you about today is fear. During a time of economic depression, Franklin Delano Roosevelt said to a frightened nation, "We have nothing to fear but fear itself." He meant unhealthy, unreasonable fear only aggravates a bad situation. We saw fear etched on the faces of those running through Manhattan's streets. And we saw some of that fear on Tuesday night as many people in our community heard the rumor gasoline was going to \$5 a gallon, so frightened motorists crowded the gas stations. Fear feeds fear—and as a result, some owners were frightened into raising prices illegally—all based upon a rumor that created a minor panic.

Insidious fear is drifting across our nation like an early morning fog over a lake. Besides high gasoline prices, what other things are causing fear today? Some children are now afraid they aren't safe in their rooms. We've told our kids there is no boogey-man or monster under the bed—only to see again there *are* monsters that kill innocent civilians and think their god will reward them. People are afraid about what will happen to our fragile economy as a result of this attack. They fear terrorist acts will be repeated. Today, I want to talk to you about how do deal

with your fear. I want to bring a positive, uplifting message entitled: “Facing the Future Without Fear.”

Jesus is here this morning in the person of His Holy Spirit. As we read these words from Luke 12, I want you to hear Him speaking these words to you. I want you to imagine Jesus is sitting in front of you and He places his nail scarred hand on your head and He says, “I tell you, my friends, DO NOT BE AFRAID of those who kill the body and after that can do no more. But I will show you whom you should fear: Fear him who, after the killing of the body, has power to throw you into hell. Yes, I tell you, fear him. Are not five sparrows sold for two pennies? Yet not one of them is forgotten by God. Indeed the very hairs of your head are all numbered. DON’T BE AFRAID; you are worth more than many sparrows.” (Luke 12:4-7)

Jesus recognized unhealthy fear was dangerous. He predicted in the last days, “men would faint with terror, apprehensive on what is coming on the world.” (Luke 21:26) The King James Version translates it this way, “Men’s heart would be failing from fear.” Indeed, as America stands on the brink of what could easily become World War III, how are we going to face the future without fear? In this passage, Jesus says twice, “Do not be afraid.” Then He gives four reasons why you don’t have to live in fear, even if the future seems unclear.

YOU DON’T HAVE TO BE AFRAID WHEN YOU KNOW THAT:

1. God is more powerful than your enemies

Jesus is telling us we don’t have to fear any human enemy because the *worst* they can do is to kill the body. Fear of death is real, but Jesus made it clear life is more than this physical existence: You and I also have an eternal soul. So we don’t have to be afraid of the worst any human enemy can do to us. We must confess the words of David when he wrote in the Psalm 56: 3-4 “When I am afraid, I will trust in you. In God, whose word I praise, in God I trust; I will not be afraid. What can mortal man do to me?”

Who is our enemy? After Pearl Harbor, we knew the Japanese were responsible. We knew Sadaam Hussein invaded Kuwait. This enemy is much harder to identify. Because of the pluralism of America, it’s not politically correct to say what I’m about to say, but I’m not as interested in being politically correct as I am in sharing the truth. You simply cannot deny there is a religious motivation behind this and most other terrorist attacks—and the religion is Islam. These aren’t Buddhist Monks or Jewish rabbis, or even the Knights of Columbus. They are Muslim mujadeen who think they are doing the will of their God, Allah. Question: What is the one thing all these terrorist attacks had in common? The Munich Olympics of 1972, the bombing of the Marine Barracks in Lebanon, the 1993 bombing of WTC, the 1996 bombing of U.S. barracks in Saudi Arabia, the 1998 bombings of U.S. embassies in Kenya and Tanzania, last year’s bombing of USS Cole, and the rash of suicide Palestinian bombers in Israel? I’ll stop there, but I could go on and give a dozen other examples. What do they all have in common? They are all led by Muslim extremists (*mujadeen*, or holy warriors) who think they are called by Allah to conduct *jihad*, or holy war. Their two main targets are Israel and the great Satan, America. Their target is also Christianity. How many of you saw the video clips from Osama bin Laden’s terrorist training video? It pictured his trainees bursting into rooms with machine guns

shooting dummy targets. Was I the only one who noticed each dummy target had a large cross painted on it?

Now don't misunderstand me, these mujadeen don't represent all Muslims any more than a Christian who bombs an abortion clinic represents all Christians. Their violent behavior doesn't reflect the beliefs of the majority of Muslims any more than Jerry Falwell's comments represent most Baptists. And, there is no justification for any acts of violence or hatred on Arab-Americans or Muslims in America. Most Americans are totally ignorant about Islam. I believe the more people know about an issue, the better choices they can make. While all Muslims aren't our enemies, a dangerous, well-financed, radically committed group within Islam has chosen to become our enemy. In true Islam there is no distinction between government and religion. Islam's self-proclaimed goal is to spread the religion of Islam throughout the world—and that includes establishing a Muslim state in every country on earth.

These enemies don't use a frontal attack where they can be seen, they slip in and out and cause as much destruction and pain as possible. But even in the light of this new kind of enemy, we don't have to fear. Why? Because our God is more powerful than *any* enemy. The worst any man can do to us is to kill the body. The enemies of Jesus did it to Him. They tortured Him and nailed Him to a cross, but they couldn't kill Him because there was *more* to Jesus than just a body: He possessed an eternal soul. And so do we. Instead of fearing any man, we should have a holy awe and reverence toward the powerful, Almighty God. Because HE has power to even cast a soul into hell. No man can send you to hell, nor can any man keep you from going to heaven, only God has that power.

You don't have to cringe in fear before God, because He is a loving Father. But you must respect His awesome power. Don't let the pictures of those jets crashing into buildings scare you, instead, tremble when you think God is a God of perfect Justice, who says, “Vengeance is mine, says the Lord.” Those self-deceived religious extremists killed themselves thinking they would wake up in Paradise with Allah rewarding their martyrdom. Boy, were they surprised! These murderers now find themselves facing an awesome God who hates hands that shed innocent blood. These terrorists may be able to hide from us but they can't hide from God Almighty. I tremble when I think of His mighty power. It makes me not the least bit afraid of terrorists. In fact, the more you fear God, the less you will fear these enemies. When the great Scottish preacher John Knox was lowered into his grave, it was said of him, “Here lies a man who feared God so much that he never feared the face of any man.”

2. God cares and he is with you when you face danger

As people watch replay after replay of those jets crashing into the World Trade Towers, and the collapse of those two icons of commerce, they may be asking two questions: “Doesn't God care?” and “Where is God?”

Jesus spoke about how much God cares for a tiny sparrow. We know from Matthew 10 two sparrows were sold for one penny, and here it is five for two pennies, meaning the merchant often threw in one for free. In other words, the fifth sparrow was basically valueless—and yet God still watches over that tiny bird. Sometimes you may feel you aren't very valuable or God

doesn't really care for you. Jesus said you are more valuable to God than many sparrows. Like Ethel Waters used to sing so eloquently, “If His eye is on the Sparrow, I know He watches over me!” Sparrows are such plentiful, tiny, insignificant creatures. Surely one can be born and fly and die without anyone ever noticing it! We may not notice it, but Jesus said in Matthew 10 God notices every time a tiny sparrow falls dead to the ground. That's how much God cares. And surely He was caring and noticing as several thousand people fell on Tuesday—many falling from a burning jet, many more falling in the middle of a million tons of concrete. He notices and He cares. God can pay attention to every sparrow and every person at the same time. He has a different attention span than we do. There is no DADD (Divine Attention Deficit Disorder).

Maybe you've wondered, “Where was God when all those people were dying?” He was the same place He was when His Son was dying. He was right there on those jets with those frightened people. He was right there among the tons of fallen rubble. And He will be with you when you face the most dangerous times of your life. Again, David said, “Even though I walk through the valley of the shadow of death, I will fear no evil, for you are with me.” Psalm 23:4. What we saw this past week was the unadulterated, uncensored face of pure evil—but we don't have to fear any evil, because God cares and God is there. We are at war, and I expect there to be other acts of violence and evil unleashed on our population but don't be afraid, God is with you. Whatever danger you may face, God is there to give you strength.

I once read a story about a tribe of Native Americans with a unique practice for training young braves. On the night of a boy's thirteenth birthday, he was placed in a dense forest to spend the entire night alone. Before that night, he had never been away from the security of his family and tribe. One particular young man was blindfolded and led many miles into the wilderness. He was instructed not to remove the blindfold for an hour. On this particular night, dark clouds obscured the moon and stars, and when he removed the blindfold all he could see was utter darkness. Every time a twig snapped, he visualized a wild animal ready to pounce. Every time an animal howled, he imagined a wolf leaping out of the darkness. He spent a terrifying night on the edge of panic, but he didn't leave. After what seemed like an eternity, the first rays of sunlight began to lighten the eastern sky. Looking around, the boy saw flowers, trees, and the outline of the path. Then, to his utter astonishment, he beheld the figure of a man standing just a few feet away, armed with a long bow and arrow. It was the boy's father. He had been there all night long.

Friend, you may not “feel” His presence all the time but He *is* there. He said, “I will never leave you nor forsake you,” (Hebrews 13:5) And He *does* care. The Bible says, we can “*Cast all our cares upon Him, for He cares for you.*” (I Peter 5:7)

3. God knows everything about you—and He still loves you

Jesus has some revolutionary truth about how much God cares for you as an individual. He says every hair on your head has been numbered—and He knows the number. This morning as I was taking a shower, God might have thought, “Well, there goes hair number 4,567 down the drain.” I didn't even notice it, but He did. That means God is concerned with even the tiny details of your life you don't even think about. Now I want to ask a question and anyone except a bald man may answer it: “How many hairs are on your head?” Experts tell us if you are blonde (a real blonde) you have around 145,000 hairs; if you are a redhead you only have 90,000; and if you

have black or brown hair, you have around 120,000 hairs. I'm amazed someone took the time to count! The point is, God knows things about you even you don't know. In other words, God knows you better than you know yourself!

The Psalmist declares: "Oh Lord, you have searched me and you know me. You know when I sit and when I rise; you perceive my thoughts from afar... How precious to me are your thoughts, O God! How vast is the sum of them! Were I to count them, they would outnumber the grains of sand." (Psalm 139:1-2, 17-18) Wow! Not only does God count your hairs, He thinks about you so many times each day, the number exceeds the grains of sand on the beach. When my family goes to Destin, Florida, we love to walk on the beach but we try to brush off all the sand before we get back into the car. As I'm brushing off my feet and legs, I sometimes think, "There's another thought, there's another thought. Thank you God for thinking of me!"

You see, not only are you more valuable than many sparrows to God, He is interested in every area of life. You may wonder how the Creator of the universe has time to think about you? That's just it. He isn't bound by time. A day is like a thousand years, and a second is the same as a century with Him. God can run the entire universe, while at the same time watching over a sparrow or listening to your prayer or thinking about you as if you were the only creature in His creation. It's like the sun in the sky. Our mighty sun keeps the planets in orbit, but it will also ripen the tomatoes in my garden as if it had nothing else to do.

That's why you don't have to be afraid—because God knows you. He knows your fears and He knows your needs. He knows you better than you know yourself—and yet He still loves you!

There's a great verse on fear found in I John 4:18, "There is no fear in love. But perfect love drives out fear." For a long time I struggled with that verse, because I thought the "perfect love" was the kind of love I should have for God. I figured the reason I was often afraid was because I didn't have a perfect love for God. One day, God showed me the "perfect love" was the love He has for me! That made all the difference! Even though God knows every time I have failed Him in the past and every time I will fail Him in the future; He still maintains a perfect love for me—so I don't have to be afraid!

4. God wants to have a personal relationship with you for eternity

The many videos made during the actual terrorist attacks have been played over and over again. Usually the sound track is muted, but sometimes you are able to hear what the camera operator or the bystanders are saying. The single cry heard time and time again was, "Oh, God!" or "Oh, my God!" Think about it. There is a basic need and a basic impulse deep within the soul of every person that cries out to connect with God during the most traumatic times of life. People crying out to God or falling on their knees to pray just reveals this basic urge.

God made you with a hole in your soul that could *only* be filled with a relationship with Him. People spend their entire lives trying to fill the emptiness with possessions, pleasure, power or prestige. But it's like trying to force the square peg in the round hole. The hole in your heart is shaped like a cross and only Jesus can fill it. Here are two verses to keep you from being afraid:

“For God so loved the world that He gave His one and only Son that whoever believes in him shall not perish but have eternal life.” (John 3:16)

Jesus prayed: “Now this is eternal life: that they may know you, the only true God, and Jesus Christ, whom you have sent.” (John 17:3)

In the next few weeks we will continue to learn more about what happened on the four hijacked flights. We have all been moved by what seems to be the apparent heroic act of the passengers who decided to overpower the terrorists on United Flight 93. What was happening on the other flights? Some reports suggest the passengers were herded toward the rear of the plane. What had to be going through their minds? I got an email from a lady who is an American Airlines flight attendant who knew one of the flight attendants who was on board the 757 that crashed into the Pentagon. She attended Bible studies with her. She said if her friend was alive and sensed the situation might lead to death, she wouldn't have been surprised if her friend started telling the passengers if they weren't Christians they needed to immediately put their faith and trust in Jesus Christ. We will never know until heaven whether or not that happened but she suspects it could have. She said that's exactly what she would have done in the same situation. If indeed she, or any other Christian took those last moments to tell people about eternal life, I imagine they were listening.

You may wonder, “How can I face the future without fear? I don't know what's going to happen!” Take a moment and write the word “LIFE” on your outline. Now circle the two middle letters. Life is full of “ifs.” There is so much uncertainty. Pastor, what are we going to do IF there is war? What are we going to do IF there are more attacks on American citizens? What are we going to do IF our economy takes a nosedive? IF, IF, IF. My response is we need to do the same thing we would do IF none of those things happen. We need to completely place our lives in God's hands. We must keep on trusting God and work on developing an intimate relationship with Him.

But if you take the remaining two letters of LIFE and remove the “if,” it's a reminder of Life Eternal. There is this LIFE and then there is ETERNITY. Your existence doesn't end with the death of your body, because you also have an eternal soul. But you can *still* face the future without fear because Jesus has made a way for us to know Him and to live with Him forever, even after this old body dies. You don't have to be afraid of what *may* happen over the next few months and you don't have to be afraid about where you will spend eternity.

A real Christian doesn't fear when confronted with death or eternity. John Wesley, founder of Methodism, was baptized as an infant and confirmed in the Anglican Church. He went through all the rituals of the church and considered himself a good Christian. He was so good in fact; he traveled across the Atlantic to serve as a missionary in the colonies of Georgia and the Carolinas. The entire time, however, he knew deep inside his heart although he was very religious, there was something missing. He had very little success and feeling like a failure, he boarded a ship to return to England. On the return voyage he met a group of Moravian Christians who were vibrant and joyous in their faith, and it intrigued Wesley. One night the ship encountered a ferocious storm. It ripped the sails and tossed the little ship for hours. Everyone, including the crew, thought they would sink and drown. Being on a little wooden ship in the middle of the Atlantic

in the middle of the storm must be the closest thing to being on a doomed airliner today. Wesley was literally trembling from fright. When he glanced at the Moravians he saw to his surprise they were smiling and calmly singing songs of praise. In that one moment, he realized he was not saved. He did not have the kind of inner peace that could sustain him when he confronted death. After the storm passed (as all storms do), he wrote about the Moravians, "the wilder the waves, the calmer they sang." His fear convinced him that his heart had never been changed by Christ. He wrote:

"I went to American to convert the Indians, but, Oh, who shall convert me? I have a fair summer religion. I can talk well: nay and believe myself while no danger is near; but let death look me in the face and my spirit is troubled. Neither can I say, 'for me to die is gain' Oh, who shall deliver me from this fear of death?"

Upon returning to England, Wesley attended a meeting on Aldersgate Street. It was May 24, 1738. While a minister was reading from Luther's preface to Romans, Wesley later wrote, "I felt my heart strangely warmed. I felt I did trust Christ, Christ alone for salvation; and an assurance was given me that He had taken away my sins, even mine!" After meeting Christ, his life was totally transformed. And there are thousands of Methodist churches, which stand as a testimony of man who learned it takes a personal relationship with God to enable a person to face eternity without fear.

Will you trust Christ today with you life and with your eternity? If you will, you don't have to fear death or the grave. That's how you can face the future without fear!

OUTLINE

You don't have to be afraid when you know:

1. GOD IS MORE POWERFUL THAN YOUR ENEMIES

"When I am afraid, I will trust in you. In God, whose word I praise, in God I trust; I will not be afraid. What can mortal man do to me?" *Psalm 56:3-4*

2. GOD CARES AND HE IS WITH YOU WHEN YOU FACE DANGER

"Even though I walk through the valley of the shadow of death, I will fear no evil, for you are with me." *Psalm 23:4*

3. GOD KNOWS EVERYTHING ABOUT YOU—AND HE STILL LOVES YOU

"Oh Lord, you have searched me and you know me. You know when I sit and when I rise; you perceive my thoughts from afar... How precious to me are your thoughts, O God! How vast is the sum of them! Were I to count them, they would outnumber the grains of sand." *Psalm 139:1-2, 17-18*

4. GOD WANTS TO HAVE A PERSONAL RELATIONSHIP WITH YOU FOR ETERNITY

"For God so loved the world that He gave His one and only Son that whoever believes in him shall not perish but have eternal life." (John 3:16) Jesus prayed: "Now this is eternal life: that they may know you, the only true God, and Jesus Christ, whom you have sent." *John 17:3*



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To put it in Texas terms, “You’re mighty welcome to use any and all of my ingredients; just make your own chili!”

For the Joy...
Pastor David Dykes