

Jesus, Life Coach: “I’m scared”

Reconnect – November 1, 2009

Series/Morning Intro:

- Welcome to Reconnect Barrhaven, where we want to be a church that loves God, helps people and builds community
- One of the phenomena that society today has brought us is the idea of a “life coach” – according to Wikipedia, it’s someone who will, for a fee, help you “determine and achieve your personal goals”
- If you can afford it, your life coach will be a constant source of inspiration, motivation and wisdom
- Or hopefully, anyway – because there’s actually nothing to keep someone from just CALLING themselves a life coach, with no certification or experience
- But what if you had access to someone who was a fantastic life coach? Who had a proven track record with millions of people? Who could point to lives turned around, people who were transformed, or even set free from the patterns of life that had kept them from enjoying their lives and succeeding?
- Well, he's available – his name is Jesus, and this morning we begin a new series called “Jesus, Life Coach”, with “I’m scared”

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[Jesus said,] “I have told you all this so that you may have peace in me. Here on earth you will have many trials and sorrows. But take heart, because I have overcome the world.”

[Then Jesus prayed,] “My prayer is not for the world, but for those you have given me, because they belong to you. And all of them, since they are mine, belong to you; and you have given them back to me, so they are my glory! Now I am departing the world; I am leaving them behind and coming to you. Holy Father, keep them and care for them – all those you have given me – so that they will be united just as we are...

And now I am coming to you. I have told them many things while I was with them so they would be filled with my joy. I have given them your word. And the world hates them because they do not belong to the world, just as I do not. I’m not asking you to take them out of the world, but to keep them safe from the evil one. They are not part of this world any more than I am. Make them pure and holy by teaching them your words of truth. As you sent me into the world, I am sending them into the world. And I give myself entirely to you so they also might be entirely yours.

John 16:33, 17:9-19 (NLT)

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Text: John 16:33, 17:9-19; Psalm 27:1-3

Key Thought: In the face of fear, Jesus offers his followers his courage; the ability to respond with wisdom to what life brings, based on trust in God.

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Intro: "The Morning After" (Halloween)

- Welcome to "the morning after", at least at my house
- Halloween in Barrhaven - at least on the old side - is a combination of a block party, a keep up with the Jones' fest, and a chance to indulge the inherent greed of your inner child, all at once
- (talk about Halloween from last night) – the final tally after two and a half hours, was 520 pieces of candy, give or take
- I find myself enjoying Halloween more as an adult than I did as a kid! Go figure...
- It's become this huge holiday - and retail has certainly responded - it's pushed Thanksgiving off the map - Loblaw's had their Halloween candy on the shelves in late August!
- You can now get Halloween lights - it's starting to like Xmas

Q: Why do people love/enjoy Halloween?

- dressing up
- for the kids
- memories of our own childhood
- wreaking havoc
- CANDY!
- halloween parties
- To act like a kid again
- a chance to be a little bit scared

Why do we like a good scare?

- Why do we like getting scared? Because we know it's artificial – we're still in control – and after we recover from the BOO, we're still OK – the suspense, the tingles, the delicious sense of shock
- Like in the Lion King, where the hyenas keep saying "Mufasa... ooh! Say it again! Mufasa!..."
- Getting scared and being frightened - being afraid - can be two very different things...
- And there aren't many who would say that they actually enjoy feeling fear

Q: What does fear feel like? - physically? -otherwise?

- Not a really nice feeling, at all, is it? And yet, it's one we've all felt before
- The “fight or flight” mechanism that God has built into each of us – when we’re threatened, or when we feel threatened, well, what do we do?
- Our fear tries to get us out of whatever we’re in, and it’s always going to try to take the shortest route – normally not the best one, or the most comfortable – just the shortest
- Fear causes us to do all kinds of irrational things – make bad decisions, cut ourselves off from other people because it makes us mistrust them and their intentions towards us – it isolates us from other people and ultimately, it even cuts us off from God – “fight or flight”

Jesus deals with fear

- Jesus knew what it was to feel fear, too - after all, he was as human as you or I
- In fact, in the section that was read earlier this morning, Jesus knew that he was going to die soon - AND he knew pretty much how it was going to happen - he was going to be horribly tortured and then executed on a Roman cross
- This is the toughest time of his life - how does he deal with his fear? And how does he do it with his closest followers all around him, who are becoming more and more afraid, too?
- The short answer is, he does what he’s always done: he prays to God, and he teaches his closest followers what it means to continue to trust God in the middle of the worst times of our lives – when fear is the only companion we have left
- That’s what He’s doing in this section, and we’re going to take a closer look at it today, as it’s found in John’s biography of Jesus

[Jesus said,] “I have told you all this so that you may have peace in me. Here on earth you will have many trials and sorrows. But take heart, because I have overcome the world.”

- Fear is based on distortion (a la Mary Poppins) – the devil is the author of fear, fear is not from God (Paul on fear?) – fear is another of the devil’s lies (different kinds of fear – God has given us fear/caution to protect us – but – the devil wants to tap that into overdrive and cause us to become so scared we’re paralyzed
- Jesus is a realist – He doesn’t say that we’re not going to have trouble – but He says that He is with us in our trouble
- **Jesus says, first off, that the antidote to fear is finding your place in Him** – standing beside Him or even behind Him, and understanding just how much He’s already done for each of us – He has overcome the system that relies on fear – the world’s system, where we act out of fear – we protect ourselves out of fear of what could happen – we hedge our speech, our thoughts, our lives out of fear of what could happen if we were ever truly honest, or real, or if we actually did what was right

John 16:33 - "...it points to the contrast between the life which all do not lead, a life in Christ. All must live in the world and thus have tribulation, but they may also live in Christ and thus have peace... This statement, spoken as it is in the shadow of the cross, is audacious. The cross would seem to the outsider to be Christ's total defeat. He sees it as his complete victory over all that the world is and can do to Him. He goes to the cross not in fear or in gloom, but as a conqueror." Leon Morris, John, pp.714-715

[Then Jesus prayed,] "My prayer is not for the world, but for those you have given me, because they belong to you. And all of them, since they are mine, belong to you; and you have given them back to me, so they are my glory! Now I am departing the world; I am leaving them behind and coming to you. Holy Father, keep them and care for them – all those you have given me – so that they will be united just as we are..."

- Jesus prays for us - is praying for us, is in our corner - this prayer is initially for his closest followers, the disciples, his closest friends who are with him - but as we enter that circle of relationship, of friendship, the prayer extends itself to us as well - and in fact, in the section following, Jesus goes on to pray for those in the world who will one day follow him
- Jesus uses "in/out" language - he doesn't pray for the world, etc. - if you want to take Jesus for a life coach, you need to get on board with him, join up with him - better than Goodlife ;) - he doesn't want to exclude anyone, but a choice is involved, to give yourself over, to put your life in his hands - you can't be coached unless you're willing to "get with the program" and "buy into the system" (to use some sports metaphors)
- **Secondly, Jesus says that we belong to God, and He is going to look after us**
- One of the tactics of the fear that hollows out our insides is to make us believe that no-one cares – there is no-one who can help except for us – and that no-one even WANTS to help us – no-one sees, no-one gives a fig
- But if you get that God is in control of the events of our lives – what comes to us by surprise, and even what comes to us as a result of either what we've done or what others have done – then that means that **our fear doesn't have to separate us** – that's the third part of Jesus' prayer – "that they will be united just as we (that's God the Father and Jesus) are"

And now I am coming to you. I have told them many things while I was with them so they would be filled with my joy. I have given them your word. And the world hates them because they do not belong to the world, just as I do not. I'm not asking you to take them out of the world, but to keep them safe from the evil one. They are not part of this world any more than I am. Make them pure and holy by teaching them your words of truth. As you sent me into the world, I am sending them into the world. And I give myself entirely to you so they also might be entirely yours.

- **Another part of the answer to fear: God’s “word” – His promise, His teaching, His plan** – and Jesus says that knowing this, hearing this from God makes us pure, makes us holy – makes us protected from so much that we fear – screwing things up ourselves, making those kinds of mistakes
- And then finally, a classic line – often quoted – “I’m not asking you to take them out of the world, but to keep them safe from the evil one”
- Jesus isn’t promising that we will have lives free of difficulty or anything to be afraid of – because sometimes fear is a valuable thing – God made it, after all – but we tend to point it in the wrong directions – towards God, towards those who could help us
- But He IS saying that we don’t need to fear the devil
 - Whether or not YOU believe in Him, it seems that Jesus does – the personal embodiment of evil, and it would seem that he is definitely at work in our world, spreading lies and generating... fear
 - But we don’t need to fear him, because as we are close to Jesus, we are protected
- 14th century mystic and follower of Jesus, a lady named Julian of Norwich, said this, commenting on a series of visions she had received of God’s love:

If there be anywhere on earth [where] a lover of God is always kept safe from falling, I know nothing of it, for it was not shown me. But this was shown: that in falling and rising again we are always kept in the same precious love. Between God and the soul there is no between. He did not say, ‘You will never have a rough passage, you will never be over-strained, you will never feel uncomfortable’, but he did say, ‘You will never be overcome’
(Revelations of Divine Love)

- And then finally, one last encouragement: “I give myself entirely to you so that they also might be entirely yours”
- That idea of being close to Jesus making a difference in our fears – that when we feel fear, and it’s not there to help us, but it’s hurting us – paralyzing us, holding us back, cutting us off from the people around us – what we need to do is get closer to God, not farther away like we might be tempted to
- John would go on to write to one of his churches, years later after that night, that “perfect love expels all fear” (I John 4) – so getting closer to the perfect love of Jesus is going to push fear out of your life – there’s just no room for it, just as turning on a light pushes away darkness

Getting through fear:

- 1) What are you afraid of?**
- 2) What’s the worst that could happen?**
- 3) Where is God in your fear? What’s the role you have Him playing?**

Key Thought:

**In the face of fear, Jesus offers his followers his courage;
the ability to respond with wisdom to what life brings, based on trust in God.**

The LORD is my light and my salvation – so why should I be afraid?

The LORD protects me from danger – so why should I tremble?

When evil people come to destroy me, when my enemies and foes attack me,
They will stumble and fall.

Though a mighty army surrounds me, my heart will know no fear.

Even if they attack me, I remain confident.

David, in Psalm 27:1-3, NLT

- **What is the courage of Jesus like?**
 - (it goes to the cross - it doesn't waver in spite of opposition, persecution, cruelty, setbacks - it perseveres, does what it has to - because He knows the strength and protection of God is with Him.)
- **What is wisdom like?**
 - (it sees the bigger picture - it makes decisions based on all the facts - it doesn't panic, it doesn't fear, it sees things clearly, it does the right thing, it leads to more wisdom)
- **What is trust in God like?**
 - (it brings peace, it brings assurance, it brings confidence in the future, it brings settledness and security)

Conclusion: courage

- What is courage? What does it look like today? Take courage... take *heart*
- Here are some of the key thoughts that I kicked around this week:
 - ***Because of the courage that Jesus showed in facing the cross, we don't have to live in fear anymore.***
 - ***With our lives entrusted to Jesus, we don't have to live in fear anymore.***
 - ***Fear loses its hold on us when we entrust ourselves to God.***
 - ***We don't have to live in fear, because Jesus wants to give us His courage - the same courage that let Him go to the cross and conquer all of the evil and sin in our world once and for all.***
 - ***The courage of Jesus is the antidote to fear.***
 - ***The world is afraid of many things, but those who entrust themselves to Jesus are able to gain His courage, to respond with faith instead of fear.***

Response: Q&A

- What makes you most afraid?
 - The thought of something happening to people I love, like my wife and kids
 - Health issues, losing my job – poverty... what else?
 - That I might let down the people who believe in me
- How do people in general deal with those fears?
- What's different about how a follower of Jesus could deal with those fears? How have you been able to deal with your fears?
- (prayer for courage)