Fear

"The only thing we have to fear is fear itself." Franklin D. Roosevelt describes a form of fear as irrational; "nameless, unreasoning, unjustified terror, which paralyzes needed effort to convert retreat into advance." The nation was coming out of a great depression in 1932 as FDR was beginning his presidency. What followed were many years of hardship rebuilding the nation. During World War II, store shelves were often empty. When they were not, items could only be purchased if the buyer had a ration coupon. Some of the conditions today look like they did then. Solomon said 3000 years ago, *"That which has been is that which will be, And that which has been done is that which will be done. So there is nothing new under the sun. Is there anything of which one might say, 'See this, it is new?' Already it has existed for ages Which were before us"* (Ecclesiastes 1:9-10).

I read of the fear that gripped the disciples while in a boat on a stormy sea (Mark 4:37-40). They feared for their lives. These fishermen, who made their living on these waters, knew that they would not survive if washed overboard. But Jesus slept. The one who made water, measured it out, and put it in its place, slept peacefully. When He awoke, for the sake of the disciples, He commanded the waters to be still. They obeyed. What then, in the physical realm, is to be feared when the creator of the universe is with us and in control?

Once, Peter was invited to join Jesus and walk on water (Matthew 14:28-32). As long as Peter looked to the Lord, all was well. As he noticed the waves around him, his fear surfaced, and he began to sink. Jesus took His hand and lifted him to safety and returned him to the boat. Then Jesus stopped the storm, again.

For many of us, the years in tropical jungles provided another set of fears. Dangers provided by the enemy were sometimes small compared to the insect and reptile life. A constant dread of the mosquitoes carrying malaria, when you could hear them more often than see them, panicked many. And then the preventive medicine and the cure medications were almost worse than the disease itself. Through all of this, some of us slept very well, knowing we were safe in the hands of God because we were washed clean in the blood of the Lamb. In today's world, after the Asian Flu, Swine Flu, Bird Flu, and other afflictions, we are facing a new virus. This one cannot be seen or heard. And it is ready to attack us on a worldwide scale. How are you sleeping?

Song number 376, in our current book, asks, *"Does Jesus Care?"* the second verse of that song asks, "Does Jesus care when my way is dark, With a nameless dread and fear?" The chorus responds, "Oh yes He cares, I know He cares, His heart is touched…" Do we believe it? Do we believe that Jesus pulled Peter back to the surface? Do we understand He is looking out for us? Are we so attached to our life here that we fail to see our savior waiting to lift us into our home in heaven?

We sing number 715, *"This World is Not My Home."* Do we also understand that as we sing, we are acknowledging that we are pilgrims here, putting up with all this world throws at us? We should remember the words of Isaiah 40:6-8. Both James and Peter quote from this. *"A voice says, 'Call out' Then he answered, 'What shall I call out?' All flesh is grass, and all its loveliness is like the flower of the field. The grass withers, the flower fades, When the breath of the LORD blows upon it; Surely the people are grass. The grass withers, the flower fades, But the word of our God stands forever."* There are continual troubles and trials until we are allowed to leave this world for our heavenly home.

Someday Jesus is coming for us as he promised in John 14: 2-3 as the angel said in Acts 1:11, or when death reaches us. We need to remain uncomfortable with the world so that we do not take our eye off *"the goal for the prize of the upward call of God in Christ Jesus"* (Philippians 3:14). At present, it looks like the COVID-19 virus is doing an excellent job of making most of us uncomfortable with the world.