
Ignite

"Dear God, we come before You. We lay our fears and anxieties at Your feet. Help us to get through all of the doubts and fears when we feel as if we are being crushed. Remind us that You are a powerful God, our Saviour. Remind us that we can trust in You. We know we can't do this on our own. We need You. In the wonderful name of Jesus we pray. Amen."



SERMON SUMMARY

Note to Word Facilitator: The sermon notes below is a summary of the sermon. You may choose to further summarize it according to the needs and context of your CG members. The goal is not just to go through it “verbatim” but to prepare well, allowing members to recall and engage the message in the best possible way.

Transforming Fear

Pastor Gilbert Tan

Isaiah 43:1-7

But now, this is what the LORD says— he who created you, Jacob, he who formed you, Israel: “Do not fear, for I have redeemed you; I have summoned you by name; you are mine. When you pass through the waters, I will be with you; and when you pass through the rivers, they will not sweep over you. When you walk through the fire, you will not be burned; the flames will not set you ablaze. For I am the LORD your God, the Holy One of Israel, your Savior; I give Egypt for your ransom, Cush and Seba in your stead. Since you are precious and honored in my sight, and because I love you, I will give people in exchange for you, nations in exchange for your life. Do not be afraid, for I am with you; I will bring your children from the east and gather you from the west. I will say to the north, ‘Give them up!’ and to the south, ‘Do not hold them back.’ Bring my sons from afar and my daughters from the ends of the earth— everyone who is called by my name, whom I created for my glory, whom I formed and made.”

Introduction [Gen 3:10](#), [Psalms 40:2](#)

The one command that is most repeated in the Bible is “fear not “ or “don’t be afraid”. Each of us have our own fears such as the fear of heights, fear of the dark, of cockroaches, of illnesses, of public speaking. The list goes on and on. The fear in us is instilled since the fall of man. The first negative emotion recorded in the Bible is fear. In Genesis, Adam said to God, “I heard you in the garden, and I was *afraid* because I was naked; so I hid.” Adam was afraid of God. Fear cripples our relationship with God and our trust in Him. We can be overwhelmed with fear, when we are apart from family during CNY. Some are fearful of their health, that their well-being may get affected. Grappling with fear is like getting stuck in the mud. The more you struggle the deeper you fall and the more you become helpless. You get physically, spiritually

and emotionally drained. Only when we depend on God, we have a foothold to get out.

The prophet addresses the issue of fear and abandonment from God during the Babylonian reign. They were strangers in a strange land and were slaves. They were losing hope. They were in exile for a long time. They were fearful of the Babylonians, their future and God abandoning them.

BIG IDEA: Fear Not for I am with You

1. God's Promise of Redemption *Isaiah 43:1*

We often associate redemption with vouchers. The word has become so shallow and superficial. The redemption talked about here is the one God rescues from a debt. He has prepaid our release. God has spoken. It will happen. God exchanges Jesus for all of us. We don't need to wait for Easter to remember what God has done on the cross for us. He has redeemed us from the grip of sin and fear. We need to be attuned to the promise of redemption.

2. God's promise of a relationship. *Isaiah 43:1*

i) He has made each of us his own

God calls you by your name. He is saying "come home _____ [your name], you are mine. Come and be with me." Come home now regardless of your mental state and spiritual exile. Pr. Chris talked about drifting a few weeks ago. Our lack of trust is because of the unknown fears in us. God desires to fellowship with you daily. Not just yearly during CNY or over the occasional coffee. There was a believer who owned a business. During the pandemic, his business was affected badly. He shared that he did his quiet time daily. Yet, there was a season when he felt that he did not receive God's input. He felt he was wasting time but God convicted him that no time spent with God is a waste.

ii. He made us to be a part of God's family

We are children of God. He is calling all sons and daughters to come home and be with the family of God. Pastor Gilbert is encouraged that he can be a part of a cell

group during a lockdown. His cell group is where he fellowships and shares his struggles with, together. We all have a family name. We are called by our own name and the name of God. We carry the name “Christian” . We carry this name to those who do not know Him. We need to hold well the name of Christ wherever we are. We need to commit to pray and love together in the cell.

3. God's Promise of His Encompassing Presence *Isaiah 43:2*

This verse shows that the life we live is not always rosy and normal. The year 2020 was a strange one for many. God does not promise us that all calamities will disappear but that He will be with us every step of the way. The overwhelming flood of your struggle will not wash you away. When God holds the seas, you will walk through it and your enemies will die in the flood. A business owner shared his concern of providing for his staff and family in 2020 because he did not receive any customers. He realized that he could not do anything about it. He prayed and felt God's presence going through him from A to Z.

Conclusion

The challenges of life in this pandemic makes us look lost. We are going through a lot of pain, suffering and loneliness. Why would God still care for you today? God says that He will be with you. We need to forget the former things and not dwell on the past. God is doing a new thing! He made a way in the wilderness and streams in the wasteland. He is making a way in the wilderness. God will not abandon us.



SERMON REFLECTION

The image of “ankle deep in the quicksand” still plays in my mind. It reflects the situation that many of us may be going through. I am in this mud alone. “It is only

ankle deep; I will get over this. Easy peasy.” I think to myself. I mean, about 90% of my body is still above this mud and life is going on as normal. I don’t call for help or tell anyone that I am a little stuck. I put on a front and everyone believes me.

As time goes by, I get waist deep in the mud. I start struggling. Life does not look as promising as it was when I started getting into it. The more I struggle, the weaker and more helpless I become. I just keep on struggling in this mud until I get weaker and deeper. Suddenly I realize I am not able to handle this muddy situation. It is now too late to get out. I might as well wallow in self pity and drown in it all by myself. I am too ashamed to tell anyone what I went through and nobody is going to understand me. I just want to drown in this mud all by myself. I scream for help but nobody is hearing my call. I feel that time is moving very slowly. I am waiting for all of this to end.

Depression hits one out of every ten Malaysians. In Malaysia, depression is still a taboo to talk about. Being depressed in Malaysia means you are a lunatic. COVID 19 has made this situation even worse. Many people have lost their jobs and businesses overnight. The income of airline, tourism, hotels, restaurants and many other “iron clad” and “foolproof” industries has gone down to zero. One year later, many are closing down because they are unable to sustain their businesses anymore.

As for me, life has been a struggle due to COVID 19. I lost my job and am now driving Grab to make ends meet. I am not saying that everything is back to normal. Fortunately for me, I have a God I can trust in , a supportive family and an amazing cell group. I echo what Pastor Gilbert shared. I can sense God’s encompassing presence during this hard time. It is also comforting to know that I have a family I can count on in my lowest times. Every week (or almost) , I attend a cell group meeting. We have fun, worship, and also pray for each other. I thank God that I have an extended family who is always there for me. I know that I am a better person because of my cell group. I am grateful that I have a God who is always with me through the toughest times in my life and I know that He will continue to be with us during these tough times.

Contributed by Abbey Thangiah



APPLICATION

Note to Word facilitator:

As you prepare for this session, this is a great time to pray that the Holy Spirit will guide you to use the questions efficiently. You can select, modify or entirely create your own questions, according to the needs of your CG, especially if you feel that there are too many questions than required for the allocated time. The questions below are crafted with a certain flow in mind. You could use these towards the end or insert them in between your own sermon reflection and summary.

Suggested Icebreaker Questions

- What movies have you always wanted to watch but were too scared to watch them?
- How many types of fears can you name in 10 seconds?

Suggested Word Introductory Questions

- Why are you afraid of something?
- Do you agree if fear was the first emotion that was depicted in the story of Adam & Eve? What other emotions were there?

Suggested Questions linked to:

1. God's Promise of Redemption.

- In your life's journey, how might God be leading you right now?

2. God's promise of a relationship

- What is your relationship with God like right now? Rate that relationship from 1 to 10. (*1 being not on good terms at all, 10 being very close*)
- How do you know that you belong to God's family?

3. God's Promise of His Encompassing Presence

- Share an instance when you were going through the floods and fires of your life and you knew that God was with you.
- How did you feel, with the knowledge and assurance that God was with you?
- What is God doing in your current situation?

Question Bank *(Extra questions you can use to bring discussion further as you see fit):*

1. How might your past be holding you back?
2. Have you doubted God's ways before? What might He be saying to you now?
3. What are some things you wish you could go back to? Take some time to ask God if these are meant for you to return to.

Bonus Activity:

Charades: Text the person who is doing welcome all the struggles and challenges you can think of. The person doing welcome will then text one member a struggle. The member has to act out the struggle and let others guess what it is.



PRAYER



Photo by Timothy Eberly on Unsplash

Note to CGL: You (or someone you assign this portion to), may lead by praying OR reading these prayers together as a CG during worship.

Myanmar

- All parties will engage in meaningful dialogue and refrain from violence.
- Democratic processes will be upheld, and the military will honour the faith and will of the Myanmarese. Restoration of democratic civilian rule as soon as possible.
- Human rights and fundamental freedoms will be respected.
- Believers to remain strong and faithful in the Lord.

Our Nation

- Wisdom and integrity of National and State leaders to steer our nation out from this pandemic-fuelled economic turmoil.
- Rule of law to prevail; continual separation of powers
- of the 4 pillars of democracy - Legislature, Executive, Judiciary and an independent Media to keep the government in check.

- Against the blight of corruption, creeping religious indoctrination, abuse of power and leakages in government expenditure infecting our nation.
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OTHER RESOURCES

*Below are some links to resources for you. Do **CLICK** on the images below!*

FEATURED

In view of our current changing landscape that affects us individually and corporately, here are some featured resources for you this month!



Our Bodies are Icons of God's Grace

seedbed.com

God fashioned our bodies to be the perfect means for rec...

Timothy Tennent

Christian Living

Article



The Sacredness of Ordinary Trasks

seedbed.com

All work is sacred when it is seen through our status as im...

Timothy Tennent

Vocation Christian Living

Article



Walking with God Through Grief

voice.dts.edu

Mom lingered in a coma for a few days. The stroke had c...

Michael Ward

Counselling Suffering

Article



Theology of Stewardship

45 minutes (Transcript provided)

voice.dts.edu

In this episode, Dr. Darrell Bock and Scott Talbot discuss ...

Darrell Bock Scott Talbot

Vocation Work

Podcast

OTHER RESOURCES

Discover a host of other resources curated for you here!



DUMC STORIES

Be blessed by a compilation of inspiring DUMC Stories that you can share with others!

