

Midweek Message
March 25, 2020

*“For God gave us a **spirit** not **of** fear but **of power** and love and self-control.”* (2 Timothy 1:7 ESV)

As we have entered this time of isolation, it has been so encouraging to see so many of you rise to the occasion and to embrace our current reality. So many of you have taken the opportunity to Worship Together Online! Thank you for coming together as the family of God at Highlands and finding ways to glorify God through this challenging time we face as a congregation and as a nation.

1. God did not give us a Spirit of fear.

Many people are panicking over what’s happening in our world, country, states, and communities. Such panic is leading to the hoarding of food and other items while still others are letting their fear immobilize them. For God’s people we have no reason to fear because even this is within the providence of God and He’ll never leave us to fend for ourselves. Instead of hiding away in fear what we really need to do is pray. The Apostle Paul tells us to *“Rejoice in the Lord always; again I will say, rejoice. Let your reasonableness be known to everyone. The Lord is at hand; do not be anxious about anything, but in everything by prayer and supplication with thanksgiving let your requests be made known to God. And the peace of God, which surpasses all understanding, will guard your hearts and your minds in Christ Jesus”* (Philippians 4:4-7 ESV). Our denomination’s Moderator has issued a call to prayer and Pastor Chris is managing a prayer time conference call through Zoom. Instructions for how to join have been emailed, by Betsy, to all who receive email. Instead of being afraid, bring your cares and concerns to God in prayer. Check out April’s Newsletter Pastor’s Page for more details on prayer.

2. God has given us a Spirit of power.

I recently received this from my daughter-in-law Laura. “Frustrated daddy (my son John) says. “You guys there’s only one of me! You have to talk one at a time please!” Determined Caleb: “But Daddy, you have two ears!!” Even though we only have two ears and can only handle a few things, God can hear all our cries and requests. We don’t have to cower in fear, but we’ve been given power from God to trust in Him and to have His peace amidst any crisis. We have an incredible God, and He is always trustworthy. In Psalm 91, verses 2,3 the psalmist writes: *“I will say to the LORD, “My refuge and my fortress, my God, in whom I trust. For he will deliver you from the snare of the fowler and from the deadly pestilence.”* As we face this pestilence remember the power of God who will deliver us in His way and time.

3. God has given us a Spirit of Love

On Sunday, in the sermon, I asked you to reach out to one another in love, and it has been so encouraging to hear all the reports of how you have “loved” one another! Even though we cannot express such love in a physical way since we cannot meet together at this time, we can still express love in a variety of virtual and electronic ways. Genuine Christian love is the most important means by which Jesus is glorified in and through us. Jesus said as much when He told us: “A *new commandment I give to you, that you **love one another**: just as I have **loved** you, you also are to **love one another**. By this all people will know that you are my disciples, if you have **love for one another**” (John 13:34-35 ESV). This love we’re to express is to be a reflection of the love that God has given us in our Savior. It knows no boundary, no condition, nothing that moves us other than the reality of God’s love expressed to us, filling us, then flowing out from us.*

4. God has given us a Spirit of self-control (self-discipline through wisdom)

Most of us have probably seen the news report of the many students that went to Florida for spring break that did not heed the call for Social Distancing, and are now returning to their campuses testing positive to share the virus with all they come in contact with. That is a prime example of not exercising self-control. We each have the opportunity to exercise self-control now. Today. Tomorrow. For the foreseeable future. Please be wise and use the Spirit of Self-Control to make good choices, acting with wisdom in accordance with Scripture which tells us: “A *man without **self-control** is like a city broken into and left without walls*” (Proverbs 25:28 ESV). I know it’s not easy to isolate as we’re created by God to live in community. One of our ARP Missionaries, Emma Pike in France (Elinor Griffin – our newest Highlands supported missionary - is in France too), sent this out: “Our restrictions as of today (our 2nd week of lockdown) went down to one hour outside per day per person and we must go alone or with a child. Thank you for praying!” Rebekah Carson, missionary in Berlin, said that Germany has banned gatherings of more than two people. Sadly, many Americans are complaining about and circumventing the 10 people limit. As believers in and followers of Jesus, we’re called to be submissive to our governing authorities and that’s certainly true in times of crisis.

As many of our medical experts and governing officials have said, we will get through this as this too will pass. Our God is a sovereign God who ordains all things that come to pass, and He has a purpose in times of crisis such as this. So, as we continue on through this moment in time just remember the Words of Scripture “*For God has given us “a **spirit not of fear but of power and love and self-control.**”*”

Pastor Mark