



Sermon Series: ALL SIGNS POINT TO JESUS

To be used with Session: The Sign of His Presence

Sermon Title Possibilities: NOTHING TO FEAR BUT FEAR ITSELF

Scripture: John 6:16-21

Connection with Unit Theme: To complement the Bible study “All Signs Point to Jesus” this sermon demonstrates that in the presence of Jesus, we have no need to fear. Matthew’s version of this incident informs us that it was Jesus Himself who directed the disciples to go ahead of Him to the other side of the Sea of Galilee in the first place (Matt. 14:22). Not only do we have no need to fear when we are in the company of Jesus, but we have no need to fear obeying the commands of Jesus, even when things don’t go our way. The God who directs us *to*, is the God who will deliver us *through*.

Introduction: According to a November 2023 Gallup poll, 40% of Americans were afraid to walk alone at night near home. Worry about being victimized by specific crimes, such as having their cars stolen or homes burglarized, was near record highs. Fear of crime deterred most Americans from doing many routine activities such as going to entertainment venues and social interactions (news.gallup.com). However, the Bible says that “God has not given us a spirit of fear, but one of power, love, and sound judgment” (2 Tim. 1:7). We can trust God to strengthen our resolve, our love for others, and wisdom enough to overcome fear, taking the necessary precautions to protect ourselves, to socially interact with the people we love, and to handle the less-than-ideal circumstances that life throws our way. The Lord declares, “Do not fear, for I am with you; do not be afraid, for I am your God. I will strengthen you; I will help you; I will hold on to you with my righteous right hand” (Isa. 41:10). His presence gives us the power to overcome our fears.

JESUS PRESENTLY KNOWS ABOUT OUR PREDICAMENT (6:16-18.)

After the feeding of the five thousand, Matthew tells us that Jesus made the disciples get into the boat to go ahead of Him. He subsequently dismissed the crowd and went up on a mountain side to pray (Matt. 14:22-23). From His vantage point, He could see that the disciples were struggling against the wind and the waves. John’s statements that “Jesus had not yet come to them,” intimated that He knew they were in trouble and in need of His help.

Jesus knows when dark times are coming (John 6:16a). When our lives are spiraling downward (6:16b). When we're in something we can't get out of (6:17a) and started a journey we cannot hope to finish (6:17b). He knows when our situations have darkened (6:17c) and the storms we are facing (6:18a). He knows because He's the one who's directing the entire thing (Matt. 14:22), for purposes that we don't understand at the time and if we're in the middle of it, He's not through with us yet. Charles Albert Tindley wrote, "We are often tossed and driv'n on the restless sea of time; Somber skies and howling tempests oft succeed a bright sunshine; In that land of perfect day, when the mists have rolled away, we will understand it better by and by" (Public Domain).

JESUS'S PRESENCE BRINGS PEACE (6:19-20)

Isaiah said, "You will keep the mind that is dependent on you in perfect peace, for it is trusting in you" (Isa. 26:3). It is not so much that we keep our minds stayed on God as much as it is God who keeps our minds stayed on Him. The disciples's minds were focused on their struggle until they saw Jesus. His presence got their minds off their problem and on to Him. Even then, they were still afraid until He assured them that it was Him. God's presence not only gives us peace, but His Word as well. "I have told you these things so that in Me you may have peace. You will have suffering in this world. Be courageous! I have conquered the world" (*John 16:33*). It is His peace and His presence that gives us the courage to overcome our fear and conquer the problems we often encounter in this world, because we are more than conquerors through Him who loves us (Rom. 8:37).

Jesus's peace is unlike the world's peace (John 14:27) in that the world's peace comes in the absence of the storms of life, while Jesus gives peace during the storms of life (John 6:20). Jesus said to them, literally "I AM, don't be afraid," reminding us of Exodus 3, when in response to Moses's question of who was sending him, God replied, "*I AM WHO I AM*" (Ex. 3:14). Jesus can provide otherworldly peace because He is the God of peace.

JESUS'S PRESENCE BRINGS US THROUGH (JOHN 6:21)

In the lyrics from "Your Grace and Mercy," the author testifies that the only reason he's living and has cause for thanks and praise is because of God's grace and mercy that brought him to the other side of "through." We often learn more about Jesus in the storms of life, than when we're safe on shore. Nevertheless, despite Jesus assuring the disciples of His presence, they still had to be willing to allow Him onboard, (invite Him into their situation). There are many people who have witnessed Jesus's power, heard His voice, and seen His peace in the midst of other people's storms, but still have not invited Him into their situation, let alone their lives.

The key to navigating the storms of life and solving many of our problems is simply to invite Jesus into our lives. The struggles we find so difficult on our own, often become easier when we take Jesus in. The joy of having Him onboard can cause a situation to end quickly and

make a long struggle seem short. Jesus said, “See! I stand at the door and knock. If anyone hears my voice and opens the door, I will come in to him and eat with him, and he with me” (Rev. 3:20). Will you open the door today?

Conclusion: “*Nothing to fear but fear itself*,” is a famous phrase from President Franklin D. Roosevelt’s 1933 inaugural speech. The phrase suggests that if we face our fear rather than allowing ourselves to be paralyzed by our fear, we can find solutions to our problems, take action, and accomplish great things.

Fear ruled a man’s life for thirty-two years. Afraid of being caught for crimes he had committed; he hid at his sister’s farmhouse for over three decades. He went nowhere and visited no one, even missing his own mother’s funeral. When he was sixty-four years old, he learned that no charges had ever been filed against him. If he had faced his fear from the beginning, perhaps he wouldn’t have lost thirty-two years of living. What are you afraid of? God has not given you a spirit of fear. Don’t let your fears control you, face them. Don’t serve a life sentence because you allowed fear to imprison you.

Bio: Dr. Jerome F. Coleman is lead pastor of the First Baptist Church of Crestmont, Willow Grove, PA, shepherding God’s flock for 16 years. He has been happily married to his wife Kim for 28 years and is currently vice-president of the National African American Fellowship of the Southern Baptist Convention.