

“Fear of Change”

Mark 14:53-65

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(Some ideas and quotes drawn from Adam Hamilton's *24 Hours that Changed the World*)

I would like to share a quote from Marianne Williamson's book, *Return to Love*. She says that, “Our deepest fear is not that we are inadequate. Our deepest fear is that we are powerful beyond measure. It is our light, not our darkness that most frightens us. We ask ourselves, 'Who am I to be brilliant, gorgeous, talented, fabulous?' Actually, who are you not to be? Do not underestimate yourself. You are a child of God. We are all meant to shine, as children do. We were born to make manifest the glory of God that is within us. It's not just in some of us; it's in everyone. As we are liberated from our own fear, our presence automatically liberates others.”

We are all born with different faces, personalities and different perspectives on life but there is something common among us. We are all born afraid. Fear is a natural reaction to protect us from a threat, but fear still weakens our will, to hold us back from boldness to be changed. It stops our motivation to move forward. Today's reading describes Jesus' trial before Jewish religious leaders and power elites in Israel. They condemned Jesus and regarded him as a “dangerous man” to their faith and to God. They decided to kill him for their protection. They believed that they were doing the right thing for the sake of God. They argued, “This man had unclean spirits, he threatened the social order.” They were afraid of Jesus because they believed he threatened their faith and their religious authority. Why must Jesus die? What did Jesus do wrong? Fear caused insecurity and hatred and provided a reason for his death. This morning, I would like to invite all of us to think about our own fears as an individual and as a church.

During Lent, we have been following Jesus' final week journey and reflecting on the meaning of his passion, suffering, death and resurrection. We began from the last supper on Thursday evening and Jesus was sentenced to death and Friday afternoon, he died on the cross. Jesus' last journey ended so quickly, within two days. Actually it was less than 24 hours. When Jesus entered Jerusalem, he received a great welcome. People had a great desire and expectation that Jesus would save them with his almighty power as the son of God, so that he would liberate them from the Romans. But when Jesus suffered and died on the cross, they were greatly disappointed in him and they turned away. However, the religious leaders felt threatened that this dangerous man

would destroy their positions of authority, their faith and even their God. The crowd wanted a Savior, but the religious leaders were afraid of him. Neither group understood Jesus. What did Jesus do?

Let's step back from both people and the religious leaders' perspective and think about Jesus' ministry. What Jesus did on this earth was not ambitious. He humbly healed the sick, forgave sinners and showed his compassionate heart to the lost. He simply witnessed and taught people that "God loves you because you are a precious child of God." He proclaimed that God is love and He loves everyone. Jesus taught people what God was really like. This is not what people expected nor what the religious leaders wanted to hear from him. Jesus' new understanding of God wasn't a powerful testimony to the crowd, but on the other hand, he was "too dangerous" for the Jewish leaders.

This makes me think about our human condition. We human beings tend to listen to what we want to hear. We act on only what we want to do. It is hard to change ourselves. We all have a fear of change. No matter what is good or not, if a new idea doesn't meet our expectations or doesn't please us, we regard it as a dangerous threat. The need of change is not easy, because it always challenges us out of our comfort zone. It was too different a way toward salvation for the people and too strange an understanding of God for the Jewish leaders.

Regarding change, when I grew up in Korea, I took it for granted that I always took off my shoes when I came home. I never questioned why I had to take off my shoes. Sometimes, my mother asked me to take off my socks, too. When I was young, I guessed that she didn't want to clean up the house or save time to keep the house clean. When I immigrated to the United States, I was shocked that people come in the house and walk on the carpet without taking off their shoes. At first, it was too strange and hard to adjust to this new culture. Now I am used to it. Actually, this is more comfortable than taking off shoes. But now I had to face another challenge after I married my wife Youngjae five years ago. Youngjae is a 100 percent Korean woman. She grew up in Southern Korea, which is culturally conservative and rural. But she is a very open minded person. She absorbs new cultural things well, except one thing. She still likes to take off shoes and asks me not to walk around wearing shoes. We tried to make a compromise that the kitchen and hard floor areas are fine with shoes, but not the carpet area. Change is not easy.

How about our church? Obviously, change is not easy for all of us. Recently we began to use a new projection system. To young people, it may not be a big change, but some of us feel that we made a risky and bold step for the future of our church. Some addressed their concern about the position of the projection

screen that it covers the cross. We hope to put a new cross below the screen in the near future. Some of us still miss the announcement time because it made us feel the sense of community. Our goal is not to ignore the importance of fellowship and the sense of a loving family. We would like to focus on worship. Our projection system is merely an effective tool to praise God. I want to thank all of you for understanding and following this direction. We have begun a spiritual renewal process through our 'Pathway to Renewal' program. Our survey session was the first step to hear the congregation's voice and to set a vision for our future. We don't want to see our church declining in the next five years. But we have to understand the reality of where we are and where we are headed. Change is not easy, but we have to prepare ourselves for a new challenge. The renewal process requires us to change our way of thinking, to have courage to move out of our comfort zone and to be bold.

Don't be afraid of change. I believe that God has a great plan for our church. Fear of change should not be in the way. In our discernment of God's will, let us be open to possibilities of change so that we continue to grow and serve our community. We are called to shine our light and to manifest the glory of God within us and our Fair Oaks church as well. Be bold for our future. Amen.