

Straight from the "Hart"

February 11, 2024



HARTLAND

Sharing the journey
to know, love, and serve

Enemies of Abundant Living (5): Free From Faith-Blocking Fear (Part 2)

Welcome to Hartland UMC's "Straight from the "Hart"". We are glad you are here and participating in worship through this service script.

Valentine's Day is Wednesday. You may know some of the uncertain history of Saint Valentine. It was a popular name back then, but there are two Valentines who probably represent the saint we honor. Their stories are so similar that they may be variations of a single person's life. What we know with reasonable certainty is that they or he was a priest in Rome and/or a bishop of Terni, Italy. He ministered to persecuted Christians and was decapitated for his faith by Claudius II in Rome.

Less clear as to what is history or legend is that while he was jailed for his faith, his captor said he would become Christian if he could heal his daughter's blindness. He did, but rather than become a Christian, his captor beheaded him.

More likely legend -- before that happened, he wrote a note to the daughter (they had become friends) and signed it "From Your Valentine". Also likely a legend, he defied the emperor's orders and secretly married couples to spare the men from being conscripted to serve in war.

The romantic notions associated with the saint did not appear until the late Middle Ages, thanks to Geoffrey Chaucer who wrote around 1375 that birds come together on Feb 14 to find their mate. And that started the human letter writing on that day as well.

(Britannica.com, history.com)

Saint Valentine isn't the only patron saint of lovers. A few weeks ago, Whales celebrated their version of Valentine's Day with their patron saint of love -- St Dwynwne. She was one of many, many daughters of an Irish King. She fell in love with Prince Maelon Dyfodrull from North Whales. But her father had already arranged for her to marry someone else. Upset, she fled to the Ynys Llanddwyn, a tidal island (that is, an island that is only an island at high tide, at low tide it is connected to the mainland). She prayed for 3 wishes -- (1) to forget her beloved (or restore him after he had been frozen -- different sources vary the story), (2) that God would meet the hopes and dreams of true lovers, (3) and that she should

never marry, Her wishes were granted and she founded a convent on the island where she devoted herself to God's service the rest of her life. A well there was named after her. It became a place of pilgrimage after she died around 465. (historic-uk.com et al)



Ruins of Sr. Dwynwen's Church
on Ynys Llanddwyn

Of course, the ultimate love story is God who sent his Son to restore the relationship between humanity and their God. John put it this way: Love is from God... because God is love. Here is how God showed his love among us: God sent his only Son into the world, so that through him we might have life. ¹⁰ Here is what love is: not that we have loved God, but that he loved us and sent his Son to be the *kapparah* (a Jewish word meaning to erase, cover, blot out guilt) for our sins...if this is how God loved us, we likewise ought to love one another.

From 1 John 4:7-11 (CJB)

And so that is why when you came in you should have received a chocolate heart... We gather and participate and give -- to enable us to continue to learn more about God's love, to love him in return, and find opportunities to exercise love for each other and our world.

Opening Prayer

Loving God, faithful and gracious forever, You love us more than we love ourselves. You believe in us more than we believe in ourselves. You call us to walk with Christ, and be more than we ever thought possible. Take our gifts. Receive our thanks. Accept our praise: through Jesus Christ. **Amen.**

© 2004 Brian Wren in *Worship & Song*, Leader's Edition.

Call to Worship

Our world and hearts are filled with needless, devastating fears. We lose much of life's fullness on account of our misgivings. They hinder us from being our real selves and rising to our full potential. We have gathered before God to remind ourselves in whom we believe and seeking his power to shed our anxieties and march ahead to meet life in triumphant faith.

Affirmation Music

Today our musical affirmation introduces the fight against unhealthy fear, worry

and anxiety. When we look around and everything seems dark and broken and encouraging us to doubt, God helps us see him as a foundation that will overcome in worrisome times....

We Believe

Words and Music: Matthew Hooper, Richie Fike, Travis Ryan
© 2013 Abundant Life Ministries

In this time of desperation when all we know is doubt and fear,
There is only one foundation. We believe, we believe.
In this broken generation, When all is dark, You help us see.
There is only one salvation. We believe, we believe.

Chorus

We believe in God, the Father. We believe in Jesus Christ.
We believe in the Holy Spirit, and He's given us new life.
We believe in the Crucifixion. We believe that He conquered death.
We believe in the Resurrection, and He's comin' back again.

We believe.

So, let our faith be more than anthems, greater than the songs we sing.
And in our weakness and temptations,
we believe, we believe.

Chorus

Let the lost be found, let the dead be raised. In the here and now let love invade.
Let the church live loud. Our God will say we believe, we believe.
And the gates of hell will not prevail, for the power of God has torn the veil.
Now, we know Your love will never fail. We believe, we believe.

Chorus

He's comin' back again. He's comin' back again.

Theme

As we set our lives on the foundation of God and his actions in Jesus Christ, we need not fear even in this scary world in which we sometimes live.

One upon a time, everyone in a certain town was terrified of getting lost in what they named the "Cave of Fear". The legend was that if anyone went into the cave, there would be a scream and then a few enormous guffaws. and then silence, and no one ever returned. The residents lived in terror that one day the laughing monster would leave the cave and come to town. To prevent it, they regularly left gifts and food at the mouth of the cave, and these always soon disappeared.

One day, a brave young man came to town and was unhappy when he heard the legend and observed how obsessed the town was over their fear. He thought that it was unfair so he decided to go to the cave and confront the monster. He asked for a team to help, but there was no one in town who dared go beyond the entrance of the cave. So he went in alone with a torch, calling out to the monster. He heard laughter in the distance and followed the sound. But then all was quiet. He carried on toward what he guessed was where the sound had come from, but the further he went, the more uncertain he became of which direction to go.

Finally, he arrived at a huge cavern below him, where he thought he could make out the shadowy figure of the monster. Suddenly something hit him hard in the back and he felt pushed through a hole and screamed in terror as he flew down a deep channel. "I think it swallowed me" he thought out loud as he fell. Then he heard the great guffaws. He landed safely on something soft – his belly? Then he heard music and many voices. As he clamored to his feet, they all yelled "Surprise!!"

He found himself in the middle of a big party. The people were all those who had never returned from the cave. They explained the historical truth of the legend. Many generations ago the town's mayor had tried to accomplish many great things. But he was held back by the fears of the people. The mayor invented the story of the cave of fear to demonstrate how much fear limited them. But the town, rather than learning their lesson, increased their fear, banished the mayor his handful of supporters there, and then over time, the legends began and grew. The young brave man stayed there, enjoying the party and the company of all those who dared to approach the cave.

And to this day, the townspeople still believe that to enter the Cave of Fear is the worst of all punishments.

(adapted from The Cave of Fear by Pedro Pabo Sacristán)

The story's metaphor breaks down if we try and interpret it physically. While there have been attempts to separate from the world to create an ideal society - be it the founding of a new town or city, a new nation, or a monastery, or a new church, or other type of community. But that is not what Jesus did or attempted to do. What he did say is that while we live in this often, dysfunctional world, scary world; we can have a peace and joy that freedom from fear that the world cannot take away...

(See John 14:27, 15:9-11, 17:13-15)

Today's Responsive reading, inspired by the words of Isaiah and Jesus, who

remind us that though much of our world may live in fear and desperation, and that surrendering to our anxieties diminishes our lives while adding nothing to it --- we can trust that the powerful God who we serve who watches with care over even the most temporary of his creation, he will certainly care for us, and when he takes action, we can be certain his purposes will be accomplished.

Responsive Reading 1 (R – Reader, C – Congregation)

R: God's thoughts and ways are beyond us. Rain and snow come down from heaven. It does not return without watering the earth, making it bud and flourish, providing seed to the sower and bread to the eater.

C: God's word will not return before it accomplishes his purposes.

R: You shall go out in joy and be led back in peace. As you come, the mountains and the hills shall burst into song, and all the trees of the field shall clap their hands.

C: Trees will grow instead of weeds -- a sign that we will never be cut off.

R: Therefore, do not be anxious about food or drink or clothing, about everyday life.

C: Life is more than food, and your body is more than clothing.

R: The birds don't plant or harvest or store food, yet they are fed. The flowers do not work or spin clothes but are dressed beautifully.

C: Worry adds not a single moment to our lives.

R: The faithless strive after all these things, and your heavenly Father knows you need them, and if he feeds the birds and clothes the fields, he will certainly care for you.

C: We will prioritize God and his righteous will.

R: Then everything else will fall into place...he will give you everything you need. Do not worry about tomorrow, for tomorrow will bring its own worries.

C: Living faithfully in today's trouble is enough for today.

Inspired by Isaiah 55:8-13, Matthew 6:25-34



Music Look to nature and to see how great our God is – and to what great lengths he goes to care for his creation and for us – our spirits can rest in trust of him. Let's sing How Great Thou Art.

How Great Thou Art

Words and Music: adapt. by Stuart K Hine, © 1953 Stuart Hine Trust
arr. by Paul Baloché



Lord, my God, when I in awesome wonder
consider all the worlds thy hands have made,
I see the stars, I hear the rolling thunder,
thy power throughout the universe displayed.

Refrain

Then sings my soul, my Savior God, to thee;
how great thou art! How great thou art!
Then sings my soul, my Savior God, to thee;
how great thou art! How great thou art!

And when I think that God, his Son not sparing,
sent him to die, I scarce can take it in;
that on the cross, my burden gladly bearing,
he bled and died to take away my sin.

Refrain

Music And realizing how great our God is, we then are able to put our hope in him and experience peace whether our lives are great, or whether they are dry and empty of filled with challenges. We must simply wait on him, allow him to weave and entwine his life with ours.

My Hope is in You

Words and Music: April Geesbreght & Ed Cash
© 2010 Sony/ATV Cross Keys Pub.

I meet with You, and my soul sings out as Your Word throw doubt far away.
I sing to you, and my heart cries, "Holy! Hallelujah! Father, You're near."

Chorus

My hope is in You, Lord, all the day long.
I won't be shaken by drought or storm.
A peace that passes understanding is my song, and I sing:
My hope is in You, Lord.

I wait for You, and my soul finds rest.
In my selfishness, You show me grace.
I worship You, and my heart cries, "Glory! Hallelujah! Father, You're here."
Chorus

I will wait on You. You are my refuge. (4 x)

Chorus

My hope is in You, Lord. My hope is in You, Lord.

Music And realizing who he is, we can put trust in his name, in his authority over all, his beautiful, wonderful, powerful name. Let's prepare our hearts for prayer by singing

What a Beautiful Name It Is

Words & Music: Ben Fielding & Brooke Ligertwood
© 2016 Hillsong Music

You were the Word at the beginning, one with God the Lord Most High.
Your hidden glory in creation, now revealed in You, our Christ.
What a beautiful name it is, What a beautiful name it is,
the name of Jesus Christ my King.

What a beautiful name it is, nothing compares to this.
What a beautiful name it is, the name of Jesus.

You didn't want heaven without us, so Jesus, You brought heaven down.
My sin was great, Your love was greater. What could separate us now?
What a wonderful name it is, what a wonderful name it is,
the name of Jesus Christ my King.

What a wonderful name it is, nothing compares to this
What a wonderful name it is, the name of Jesus.
What a wonderful name it is, the Name of Jesus.

Death could not hold You, the veil tore before You,
You silence the boast of sin and grave.
The heavens are roarin', the praise of Your glory,
for You are raised to life again.

You have no rival, You have no equal
Now and forever, God You reign.
Yours is the kingdom, Yours is the glory,
Yours is the name above all names.

What a powerful name it is, what a powerful name it is,
the name of Jesus Christ my King.

What a powerful name it is, nothing can stand against.
What a powerful name it is, the name of Jesus

You have no rival, You have no equal.
Now and forever, God You reign.
Yours is the kingdom, Yours is the glory,
Yours is the name above all names.

What a powerful name it is, what a powerful name it is,
the name of Jesus Christ my King.

What a powerful name it is, nothing can stand against.
What a powerful name it is, the name of Jesus.

What a powerful name it is, the name of Jesus.
What a powerful name it is, the name of Jesus.

Prayers And Lord, recognizing your greatness through your works that are all around us, in nature, in people, in circumstances resolved, we turn to you and put our hope and trust in your name, Jesus, and the powerful authority that you are granted over all things. We listen as you tell us not to be afraid of what the future holds, not to worry about tomorrow, but you know how difficult we find it to heed your words. Like a recently read joke stated, One tried to encourage another by saying – “Don’t dwell on your past failures, there are plenty of current and future failures to dwell on.” (© p.c. vey, cartoonstock.com) We must confess that many of us tend to worry about many things, our families, our friends, our circumstances, big worries, worries that only you know, and worries that should not be worries at all, yet keep us awake at night. You tell us to cast these cares on you, for you care for us (1 Peter 5:7), and so we boldly lay them all at your feet.

Petitions Specifically, Pat Schleh requests we pray for Donna Webber who is not feeling well, * and for Don Wilkinson who fell and hurt his arm and elbow, * Mary Jo Malott updates Stephen Brittain, whose cancer has spread, * and David Babcock requests prayers for a friend Lisa who has pain and health issues. * we continue to pray for our church, our community, for ourselves. * for those facing challenges of any kind, * for peace in our world and in our homes, * for those who

are not feeling well in any way shape or form, * for Jan Martin, * for Mary Jo's work associate Jerry, * and for her aunt Janet.

We bring our big worries about health and happiness and security for ourselves and for our loved ones. We bring big worries about the world we live in and its future existence as we continue to fail to address so many problems. We bring big worries about the way people in our world are treated as less than human.

Living God, reach out to all whose future seems dark and circumstances feel like they are spiraling out of control and encourages fear and uncertainty. Remind them, remind all of us, that you are able to transform even the bleakest of situations with healing and wholeness. Lord we make our prayers in faith, for we know that your Spirit is at work in our world making all things new, so that more and more, we and others will better live out the the prayer that you taught us to pray. **Lord's**

Prayer

Portions of prayer adapted from "Prayer of Intercession inspired by Luke 12:32"
by Rev. Anne Patton, churchofscotland.org.uk

Intro to and Bible Reading 2

R: Jesus tells a parable that warns us to be alert and prepared for his return. Then in the parable we are going to read, he warns us that while he is away and before his return, disaster will come to those who are not busy wisely investing their lives with the gifts and resources he has given us. And a third parable tells us that that investment is in what we do for those in need. But those who do well will be rewarded with eternal life.

(See Matthew 25:1-13, 28-30, 31-46).

Hear the second parable:

Again, the Kingdom of Heaven can be illustrated by the story of a man going on a long trip. He called together his servants and entrusted his money to them while he was gone. He gave five bags of silver to one, two bags of silver to another, and one bag of silver to the last — dividing it in proportion to their abilities. He then left on his trip.

The servant who received the five bags of silver began to invest the money and earned five more. The servant with two bags of silver also went to work and earned two more. But the servant who received the one bag of silver dug a hole in the ground and hid the master's money.

After a long time their master returned from his trip and called them to give



an account of how they had used his money. The servant to whom he had entrusted the five bags of silver came forward with five more and said, "Master, you gave me five bags of silver to invest, and I have earned five more." The master was full of praise. "Well done, my good and faithful servant. You have been faithful in handling this small amount, so now I will give you many more responsibilities. Let's celebrate together!"

The servant who had received the two bags of silver came forward and said, "Master, you gave me two bags of silver to invest, and I have earned two more." The master said, "Well done, my good and faithful servant. You have been faithful in handling this small amount, so now I will give you many more responsibilities. Let's celebrate together!"

Then the servant with the one bag of silver came and said, "Master, I knew you were a harsh man, harvesting crops you didn't plant and gathering crops you didn't cultivate. I was afraid I would lose your money, so I hid it in the earth. Look, here is your money back." But the master replied, "You wicked and lazy servant! If you knew I harvested crops I didn't plant and gathered crops I didn't cultivate, why didn't you deposit my money in the bank? At least I could have gotten some interest on it." Matthew 25:14-27 (NLT)

Music I think most of us, at one time or another, have at least felt like wanting to resist the call and command of God and hide what God has gifted to us, in fear of rejection or ridicule, or simply being overwhelmed by the tasks of life that lay before us. Our pre-sermon song reminds us that when those things happen, we can learn and grow and make a fresh start with a faith that can grow stronger to meet the needs of our days. If comfortable to stand, stand and sing with us What Faith Can Do.

What Faith Can Do

Words and Music: Scott Davis and Scott Krippayne

© 2008 Word Music

Ev'rybody falls sometimes. Gotta find the strength to rise
 from the ashes and make a new beginning.
 Anyone can feel the ache. You think it's more than you can take,
 but you're stronger, stronger than you know.
 Don't you give up now; the sun will soon be shining.
 You gotta face the clouds to find the silver lining.

Refrain

I've seen dreams that move the mountains,
 hope that doesn't ever end, even when the sky is falling.
 I've seen miracles just happen, silent prayers get answered,
 broken hearts become brand new. That's what faith can do.

It doesn't matter what you've heard, "impossible" is not a word;
 it's just a reason for someone not to try.

Ev'rybody's scared to death when they decide to take that step out on the water,
 but it'll be alright. Life is so much more than what your eyes are seeing.

You will find your way if you keep believing.

Refrain

Overcome the odds when you do have a chance.
 When the world says you can't, faith'll tell you that you can!

Refrain

That's what faith can do!
 Even if you fall sometimes, you will have the strength to rise.

Sermon Free From Faith-Blocking Fear (Part 2)

Last week we heard that there is a healthy sense of fear that helps us not do stupidly dangerous things, helps us prepare and perform better. But at some point, fear crosses a line and rather than assisting our life to becoming the best it can be, it begins to hinder and even paralyze us from doing our tasks. Some people get "stage fright" and channel it to help them do even better. Others get "stage fright" and it overwhelms them to where their mind goes blank, and they can barely perform at all... Like the man with a single bag of silver, or other versions call it gold, coins, dollars, money, or talents --- fear causes us to bury whatever we have been given, and often bury ourselves prematurely.

Throughout our lives, as we look to the near and distant future, we have a phrase that we may often think –“Now what?” And then as we move into a difficult future, we flip the phrase and think, “What now?”

Not true for all, but generally speaking, for me, up through high school; school, church, work, and family made life relatively easy because they all combined to bring a predictable and reliable structure to life. You didn't have to think much about what you were going to be or do. Then graduation, and as very young adults, we have to ask, “Now what?” I had no clue. I went to college where my sister had gone. I finished that after several “What now?” and “Now what?” with my choices as a major and ended up with a non-teaching English degree. And left college in a

weak economic time which made me over-qualified and/or under-experienced; and I couldn't get work in my desired field, so I asked again, "Now what?" And my rapidly developing worries kept me from recognizing my call to ministry for a long time, because my worry and anxiety and fear of failure kept me thinking "Not Me, no way!" I finally relented.

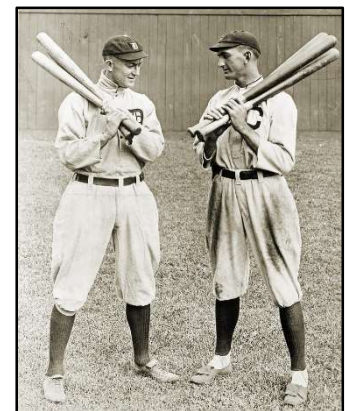
After saving (very little) for about a year, I and my wife left everything and moved from Lansing to Kansas City for seminary -- knowing no one, no job; getting into an apartment and that alone about wiped us out financially. The question naturally comes, "Now what?" and on and on it went, "Now what...what now? ...now what... what now? Nevertheless, step by step, God provided answers.

Then I went to my first church. It was a terrible match and a total disaster. During that period, I often asked, "What now??" I left that church and didn't know it at the time, but also the denomination, and was in-between for a while, and was again asking, "Now what?"

I was developing to maturity a strong ability to worry about just about everything real *and imagined* into worst case scenarios. Mark Twain was credited with saying that "I've had a lot of worries in my life, most of which never happened." Yet obsessing about all the uncertainties of all the possibilities -- all the "now what" s and "what now" s -- kept me from clearly finding my path and almost led me into jumping into something as disastrous or more disastrous than that first church, which, in hindsight, I had jumped into because I was afraid, I would have no other serious or better offers.

When we are bottled up with worry and always asking the questions "what now?" and "now what?", everything is wide open with equal uncertainty, and you can't find direction; it prevents us from figuring out and proactively pursuing and creating what will be next. While healthy fear makes you over perform, unhealthy fear makes you underperform.

Baseball players Ty Cobb and Shoeless Joe Jackson were neck and neck for the batting average title one year. They were good friends. When the two teams met in an important series, Cobb refused to speak to Jackson. Jackson began to worry that he had offended Cobb in some way. So much that he lost his batting eye and went into a slump and Cobb went on to win the title. Now that is not a "good friend to me" but



outside of the moral high ground that he avoided, it does illustrate what worry does to our ability to function when it crosses that unhealthy line.

In India, there is a bird called a red-wattled lapwing. It is nicknamed the “Pity-to-do-it” bird because it has an alarming call that sounds something like “did-he-do-it” or “pity-to-do-it” – all day long. Then as the story goes (as E. Stanley Jones shares it), the bird sleeps with his feet in the air to keep the sky from falling. It is a champion pessimist and worrier, never relaxing day or night. It is no wonder, Jones says, that it is a thin, scrawny, and fussy bird.



When we are tense with anxieties and fears, it is like we are parked with the engine running. We use up all kinds of energy and power -- to go nowhere, and you cannot safely take in fuel. Fear tells us that “God doesn’t care or won’t do anything”, and worry tells us “I’ll give you a sense of control over your situation” but it is a lie – Jesus says, Worry cannot add on minute to your life, to your life. Worry and anxiety works to create an incapacity to meet the dreaded thing when it actually comes, if it ever comes. But with God, you can, with confidence, meet your fear, overcome it, and eliminate it or return it to its healthy state and channel it into the purpose of your life. Faith says God cares, and God and I will work it out together. We supply the willingness. God supplies the power. With that combination we can do anything.

Last week we began naming a few practical strategies to overcoming **unhealthy** fear. (1) Truly desire to be worry free. (2) Be confident in God’s ability to work. (3) Pray boldly about our fears. As Paul wrote: Don’t be anxious in anything, but in everything, and with thanksgiving, present your requests to God, and God’s peace will guard your hearts. (See Philippians 4:5b-7) You may not get what you want, but God’s peace will be with you if you are truly giving it to him. And finally, we said, (4) wait on the Lord: intertwine our life with the Lord so tightly that his strength supports our weakness.

This week we add some additional assurances and strategies.

First, know that we are **designed for faith**. Fear and anxiety gums up the machinery of life, and faith is the oil that makes it move more smoothly. We live better by faith and confidence than by fear and worry. Know that we are structurally designed for faith and confidence and our lives are better when living by faith than by fear.

Designed for Faith

Secondly, **Decide your focus.** Most often, you will find what you are looking for. It is the law of the mind that whatever gets your attention gets you. If your worries (food, drink, clothes, etc) get your attention, that is what will get hold of you. You've probably heard the Native American story of the two wolves. One is good, is not easily offended, seeks to live in harmony, and only fights when it is right, and even then, does it in a constructive way. The other wolf is evil, is easily offended, leaps quickly to unhealthy anger and hate, which is like ingesting poison and wishing the other would die from it. So filled with anger and hate, he fights anyone and everyone for no reason. These two wolves are battling for your heart, and the one that wins is the one you feed.

Decide your Focus

If worry gets your attention, worry gets you. If Christ gets your attention Christ will get you, and you get him.. As Matthew says, Seek first -- prioritize -- the kingdom and righteousness.

Thirdly, **Divide and conquer.** This is not about dividing people against each other so you can more easily win – this is about breaking up actions into steps so that they are less overwhelming and more manageable. Jesus says, “worry only about today”. Some people take that to mean we should never plan. But Jesus doesn't say don't plan (in fact he speaks elsewhere about the necessity of planning, counting the cost, look down the road to the future (see for example, Luke 14:28). There is a big difference between planning and worrying. If you pull future worries into today, then it is harder to handle today, because you have to spend worrisome energy on both today and on what's coming up – or *may* come up.

Divide and Conquer

As the proper example of divide and conquer, Ben's 3rd grade teacher gave a ton of homework that overwhelmed the average student, much less a young boy who was still trying to decipher how to cope with autism – of which one common symptom is sensory overload that overwhelms. He did what most who have that symptom do – they shut down and refuse to do any of it. So we developed a strategy in which we would cover up all the problems so he could only see the one he was working on -- then he wasn't as overwhelmed and he was usually able to progress for a considerable length of time before taking a break and then working again, and he started to develop some of the coping skills he needed to work through what began as an impossible year.

One you divide and conquer and then one at a time, Fourth, **Dare to face your fears.** Elsie Robinson wrote

Dare to Face your Fears

“Un-pleasantness can be a disease. It provides an escape for our cowardice, an excuse for our laziness, an alibi for cussedness, and a spotlight for our conceit: Hunt down [fear] as you would hunt for lice -- loathe it. Face it, get rid of it.

And finally, **Do something**. The first two men in the parable took initiative and went out and did something. The third was criticized because he could have done something, but he didn't do more than the most basic of proper and safe strategies in that day that would relieve him of responsibility, [Burying was a standard practice for keeping the valuables safe and being alleviated from responsibility]. But clearly, the expectation is that we at least *try* to do something.

Do Something

A watchmaker was asked why he always kept his watches and clocks running. He answered, “It keeps them in better condition.” We too, are made for constructive activity, and emotional health comes to us as a by-product.

If *all* you do is talk about ailments, you'll find more and more to talk about; first, because you are looking for them, and second, because negative thinking has a negative effect on our person.

We are told that frogs (or at least, the frogs that ES Jones was talking about) will not croak in running water, only in stagnant water. You will become a croaker if your life is stagnant. Get into the stream of helpful activity, of doing something positive, and you'll cease croaking (and Jones adds, you won't croak before your time). Face life confidently and unafraid, and it doesn't mean you'll get everything right or everything will go perfectly but you will be saved from a purposeless and disintegrating life. Don't let worry get a foothold, or even a toehold. Instead allow God to wrap his life in yours, with his power and glory and freedom from fear.

Chris Tomlin, Ed and Scott Cash wrote these words of praise to God:

<p>You hear me when I call You are my morning song Though darkness fills the night It cannot hide the light Whom shall I fear I know who goes before me I know who stands behind The God of angel armies Is always by my side The one who reigns forever He is a friend of mine</p>	<p>My strength is in your name For you alone can save You will deliver me Yours is the victory Whom shall I fear And nothing formed against me shall stand You hold the whole world in your hands I'm holding on to your promises You are faithful,</p>
---	--

We can have faith in his faithfulness to us. Let's pray....

Prayer Lord, as we move into our future – reassure us that your plan and word for our life will always accomplish your purpose, so that may we plan and speak and act, not in fear, but in the confidence that what you do in and through us, and it will not be empty or in vain, but that you will guide our life into effective productiveness in the name of Jesus Christ our Lord, Amen.

Music No matter what we face, if we turn to God, we know he will faithfully hold on to us and our lives will be safe in his hands, fear and evil can do nothing to our spirits, for his perfect love will cast out all fear. If comfortable, stand and sing with us You Never Let Go.

You Never Let Go

Matt Redman, Beth Redman arr. by Jeff Anderson
© 2005 Thankyou Music

Even though I walk through the valley of the shadow of death,
Your perfect love is casting out fear.
And even when I'm caught in the middle of the storms of this life,
I won't turn back, I know you are near.
And I will fear no evil, for my God is with me.
And if my God is with me, whom then shall I fear, whom then shall I fear?

Refrain

Oh, no, you never let go through the calm and through the storm.
Oh, no, you never let go in ev'ry high and ev'ry low.
Oh, no, you never let go, Lord, you never let go of me.

Yes, I can see a light that is coming for the heart that holds on,
a glorious light beyond all compare.
And there will be an end to these troubles,
but until that day comes, we'll live to know you here on the earth.
And I will fear no evil, for my God is with me.
And if my God is with me, whom then shall I fear, whom then shall I fear?

Refrain

You keep on runnin' and you never let go. Singin'
Refrain

Yes, I can see a light that is coming for the heart that holds on,
And there will be an end to these troubles, but until that day comes,
still I will praise you, still I will praise you---

(Repeat)

Refrain

You keep on runnin' and you never let go. Singin'

Refrain

Blessing Now as we go, go to do what is good. Live with quiet confidence, delight in God's presence, and commit everything you do to God. Trust him completely. Be patient and learn to rest in God's presence. He will never let you down. You will have everything you need. Bring glory to the Father, through the power of the Spirit and in the name of Jesus Christ our Lord, Amen.

adapted from portions of "Blessing (inspired by Psalm 37:3-9)"