

## Who's Afraid of...Getting Hurt!

John 20:19-23

May 5, 2019

There is a question asked in the children's classic story, "The Three Little Pigs."

We all know what that famous question is... "*Who's afraid of the big bad wolf?*"

For the next nine weeks we are going to be asking ourselves that question, "Who's afraid of the big bad wolf?"

We are going to be looking at nine different "big bad wolves" that most folks fear these days.

We will ask the questions: Who's afraid of... getting hurt; being a nobody; failure; change; God's absence/silence; past mistakes; getting lost; old age and finally Judgment Day.

Who's afraid of...!?!?

What are your fears in life? I believe that as we ask these questions we will discover a strong foundation to build our lives on that no "big bad wolf" will be able to huff and puff and blow down.

Who's afraid of the big bad wolf?

I am!

I am afraid of the big bad COYOTE!

A few weeks ago my backpacking mentor, Don, and I headed out on what was to be a 2 night and 3 day backpacking trip into the Juniper Wilderness section of the Ocala Forest. This trip was canceled a month ago due to nuisance bear activity that shut the wilderness down.

So the day comes! The nuisance bear has been removed. The only sign of bear we saw on our 5 mile hike into the wilderness was one old bear "scat" on the trail. We arrived at Hidden Pond where we set up camp. It was beautiful. A spring fed pond on one side of the camp and a wide open prairie on the other side.

We filtered our water. Ate our lunch and hung out in the hammock. After dinner we watched a beautiful sun set over the prairie. It was time to go to our tents for a nice sleep in the wilderness.

The choir of frogs started singing their wilderness cantata! This lasted for well over an hour. There was some chattering critter in the branches above my tent. I was still fine and gradually drifted off to sleep.

I have no idea what time it was in the night when I was awakened to the sound of a pack of maybe 6 coyotes! They were not howling their Hollywood howl. They were howling a fighting and aggressive howl. A chill literally ran from my right foot all the way up my leg and into my heart! I was scared! All of a sudden I heard a yelping like an injured dog would yelp! These were not happy coyotes!

My heart started pounding. I had all kinds of images running through my head. I had no defense against a pack of wild and angry coyotes except a canister of bear spray! I started talking to God! I kept talking to Him after the howling of just a minute or two stopped. I imagined that pack of 25 coyotes coming into camp and searching for some defenseless camper to have for a midnight snack.

Who's afraid of the howling of wild coyotes!!??!!! I AM!!!!

I finally fell back asleep. I never heard from them again. I was awakened a few hours later with flashes of light! Lightning! The weather was suppose to have been clear that night. I counted the seconds between the flash of light and the sound of thunder. 5 seconds! Not a problem. The storm is over 5 miles away. The open prairie magnified the sound of the thunder! 5...4...3...2...1 rain and lighting and thunder came to our wilderness camp! I was okay because we were camped under a small hammock of oaks with tall pine trees out in the prairie that served as lightning rods. I was also fine because there were no leaks in my tent!

After the rain stopped we rolled out of our tents and had our coffee and breakfast. I shared about my COYOTE CHILL with Don. He shared how he had never heard them out in the Juniper wilderness in all his times camping out there. Lucky me! The weather was to intensify later in the afternoon and on into the night. We made the decision to break camp and hike back to civilization because of the weather. Right! Bye bye Coyotes!

Who's afraid of the big bad Coyotes? ME!

What was it that I was afraid of out there in the middle of a wilderness with a pack of angry coyotes howling off in the distance? I was afraid that I was going to get hurt by them. I had envisioned the pack of 50 coyotes coming into camp and doing a number on Don and I.

I could see the headlines now: "Two old men mauled by a pack of 100 coyotes!"

Notice how the number increases out of fear?!

We begin our adventure into the wilderness of life and face our first fear together. That is the fear of "getting hurt."

Who's afraid of getting hurt?

I am!

We should all have some fear of getting hurt. If we didn't we wouldn't look both ways before crossing a street. We wouldn't have second thoughts about swimming in shark infested waters. We would have no problem with...whatever our pack of howling coyotes might be in our lives!

The opposite of this fear of getting hurt is that we can become so obsessed with being afraid of getting hurt that we never venture out of our safe zone. Will I go backpacking again? You betcha! Will it be to the Juniper Wilderness? The jury is still out on that one...been there done that! Take me to the Appalachian trail!

People who are afraid of getting hurt physically will most likely not take risks or venture out into a new wilderness experience. They will park it on the lazy boy and only venture to the store and back home...sometimes that can be more terrifying than facing a pack of 150 angry coyotes!

Who's afraid of getting hurt? Not only are we afraid of getting hurt physically...we are also afraid of getting hurt by the aggressive howling of emotions. Often people who are afraid of getting hurt emotionally will keep themselves from entering any type of close relationship with someone. They may keep family and friends at arms length because of a past hurtful experience they had with the pack. They were the one who was yelping because they had been hurt by someone in the family pack or by a friend.

Who's afraid of getting hurt?

The disciples of Jesus were afraid of getting hurt. After Jesus' death on Friday they went home and locked the doors in fear of the pack of religious leaders and Jews who had killed Jesus. (John 20:19) They were fearful that they would be next since they were followers of Jesus. They prayed! They waited and listened fearfully for the knock on the locked door of the room they were hiding behind in fear.

What a long two nights, Friday and Saturday, before the sun rose on Sunday. They were told that Jesus had risen from the dead. They didn't believe it. They were feeling far from secure.

Sitting in terror, suddenly like a flash of lightening, Jesus appeared. He was alive!

He speaks to them, what anyone who is afraid would want to hear, the calming statement, **"Peace be with you!"** At first glance we hear this to mean, *"Calm down! I got this. I will take care of the fear you are experiencing."*

Sounds good to me. But what Jesus was saying to the disciples, what this phrase, **"Peace be with you"** really meant was, **"May God give you every good thing."**

In our moments of being afraid of getting hurt, can we hear Jesus' Holy Spirit speak to our spirits, **"Peace be with you. May God give you every good thing."**

What does this say to us? It calms the chills of fear and reminds us that God can cause all things to work together for good to those who love Him and trust Him in the times of fear. (Romans 8:28)

The dark fears of Friday and Saturday can seem overwhelming and even crippling. However, we know that the rising sun on Sunday, of the resurrected Son, overcomes any of that. We are promised that Jesus is greater than any fear we might face. (John 16:33) Jesus had directly spoken this promise to his disciples when they would find themselves afraid of being hurt.

The disciples had been in a place before this where they were terrified for their lives. They had just experienced a big day of ministry with Jesus and the crowds. Jesus decided he wanted to go to the other side of the lake. They get in a boat and set sail. A storm comes up out of nowhere and threatened to sink the boat. Jesus was sleeping through it all. The disciples were afraid they were not going to get hurt...they were afraid they were going to drown.

They woke up Jesus and asked a dumb but desperate question of fear, **"Jesus, don't you even care...?"** (Mark 4:38) But when you and I think about the question, **"Jesus, don't you even care?"** I don't know about you but I have voiced that question, in times of fear of getting hurt, to God.

The answer to that question, is one we need to hear. Jesus calmed the storm and then he had a question for the disciples, **"Why are you so afraid? Do you still have no faith?"** (Mark 4:40)

Think about the storms, the fears in your life. Think about the situation that causes you to be afraid that you will get hurt... physically or emotionally.

Whatever your difficulty or fear you have two options: You can worry and assume that Jesus no longer cares about you. Or you can resist this fear and worry and be reminded that Jesus is there and cares. He is in the boat, or the tent! He will see you through the fear as you place your trust in Him. We are to turn our fear to prayer. (Philippians 4:6) Prayer reminds us we are not facing this fear alone.

Fear is a dark shadow, a valley of the shadow of death, that envelopes us and ultimately imprisons us within ourselves. Each of us have been a prisoner of our fear of being hurt. We have heard the heart chilling howls of rejection, disease, misunderstandings, bullying, disability and even death.

But we can call out to God, like David often did, ***"The Lord is my Light and Salvation---whom shall I fear? The Lord is the Stronghold of my life---of whom shall I be afraid?"*** (Psalm 27:1)

We conquer the darkness of fear with the Light of Jesus!

We can struggle with our fear of getting hurt by our enemies of sickness, broken relationships, suffering, pain and ridicule. Strength and courage alone can't beat the fear. Only as we trust Jesus to see us through will we get through the valley of the shadow of death.

When Moses and Joshua faced the fear of the wilderness and the enemies of a foreign land they spoke God's words to the people of His presence:

***"The Lord himself goes before you and will be with you; he will never leave you nor forsake you. Do not be afraid; do not be discouraged."*** (Deuteronomy 31:8)

God spoke these words of assurance through the prophet Isaiah to the people in bondage when He said, **"Don't panic. I'm with you. There's no need to fear for I'm your God, I'll give you strength. I'll help you. I'll hold you steady, keep a firm grip on you."** (Isaiah 41:10 Message bible)

What are the common comments God makes to those who are afraid of getting hurt?

*"I am with you. Don't freak out! I can conquer this fear you have if you will love me and place your trust in me."*

Jesus put it this way,

**"Peace I leave with you; my peace I give you. I don't give to you as the world gives. Do not let your hearts be troubled and do not be afraid."** (John 14:27)

Jesus was talking about the power and presence of His Holy Spirit being given to any who trust and believe in Him as their Savior. The end result of the Holy Spirit's presence and work in our lives is to bring peace to those who are frightened by life. He brings a peace and comfort to those who have been hurt or live in fear of being hurt.

This peace is an assurance and confidence that He is with us. We are not alone in our fear of getting hurt by life. We have no reason to fear or be afraid knowing that He is with us.

When we find the coyotes of life howling at us we are to prayerfully allow the Holy Spirit to fill us with peace. (Philippians 4:6-7) Sin, fear, uncertainty, doubt and numbers of other coyotes of fear are howling at us. The peace of Christ's Holy Spirit comes and brings to us a peace that will restrain this fear from hurting us. We can find His comfort as we face the fear of getting hurt in life.

Reality of life tells us that we are more likely to get hurt by people than we are a pack of coyotes. In fact, the writer of Proverbs, the book of wisdom in the Old Testament, wrote this truth:

***"The fear of human opinion disables; trusting in God protects you from that."*** (Proverbs 29:25 Message bible)

Fear of people and their opinions can hamper everything you try to do. In extreme forms it can come raiding your camp and cause you to pack up and leave home or a relationship not certain if you can or will ever return.

On the other hand, trusting God, listening to His promises, acting on His directions, can bring us to a place of overcoming our fear of being hurt. Why be afraid of people's opinions who cannot harm your eternal heart? Trust in God who speaks life to all who believe in Jesus, the resurrected one. He won the victory over our fear of being afraid of getting hurt!

Who's afraid of getting hurt?

What pack of coyotes' is howling in your wilderness experience? Call out to God who is right there with you to see you through the darkness into the light?

Who's afraid of getting hurt?

