

If you have your Bibles, why don't you go ahead and grab them? Genesis, chapter 1, is where we're going to start. Last weekend we tackled the ideas of guilt and shame and what to do with guilt and shame. We looked at what God has done for us in Jesus Christ and how the gospel interacts with guilt and shame and that, ultimately, when all is said and done, the gospel of Jesus Christ drives out the fact we have fallen short of God's right and good decree and also drives out our shame.

You have *guilt*, which is a falling short of a standard, namely the law of God, and then you have *shame* that can be felt either because of guilt or simply because we don't measure up to what we think we should measure up to. What God does in justification, or in granting to us the righteousness of Christ and taking from us our sins, is he drives away guilt.

We looked at the book of Colossians, where it says he has canceled the record of debt. The good news about what Christ has done for us is that the record of debt has been canceled. If you are a believer in Christ, all of your sins, past, present, and future, are accounted for on the cross of Jesus Christ, nailed to the cross of Jesus Christ so that you are guiltless, according to the Word of God. That happened on the cross.

But we still have to deal with shame, because guilt and shame aren't the same things. Shame is dealt with by the adopting love of our heavenly Father calling us to himself as his children. Delight, with full knowledge of every dark crevice of our hearts, so unnerves and unwinds us that it drives out shame. Even at our youngest, being delighted in is difficult. I used the illustration, because it struck me as poignant when I was studying and getting ready for that message last weekend...

Thursday is our family night, so we rotate through our children. We don't just pick one child and every week go, "You're awesome" while the other two just watch. It was Norah's turn, so we stood Norah up on a chair at our dining room table, and everybody got to go around the room and say something we really love about her and what she brings to our family. You can only use one. You can't use up all of them and leave nobody else in the room with anything to say. That's Lauren. Lauren is like, "And this and this and that." I'm like, "Baby, there are four of us here. Leave something for us."

What I noticed is that when we were trying to say, "You bring joy to our family, you bring an energy that no one else brings..." Can you imagine that? We were trying to bless her, and what I picked up on is she

couldn't look at us. She's smiling, so she likes it, but she couldn't look at us. What do you have to be ashamed of when you're 4? I don't know that it's shame as much as it's just difficult, even at her level of innocence, 4-year-old innocence (I don't mean guiltlessness; I mean innocence)... When all is said and done, she still can't handle it.

I said, "Isn't this a perfect picture of what we're like?" How much more difficult is it for us to believe that God likes us and delights in us? Because we know who we are. *We* don't even delight in us. Those of us who *do* delight in ourselves are deceived in our delight in ourselves. In fact, it has been my experience that the more brazen a guy...

Some of you are thinking, "I have no problem. You can tell me how awesome I am and I'll stare you right in your face. 'Amen, brother. You're right. I'm glad *you* saw that, because I was putting it out there.'" I have found that, almost 100 percent of the time, to be a type of insecurity that is fronted out of self-hate. So really, your bravado does nothing but reveal your own insecurities.

Then ultimately, we just marveled at the fact that when our heavenly Father sees us and has compassion on us and throws the ring on our finger and the robe on us and kills the fatted calf and starts the party, over the fact that we were wayward, in the pit with the pigs, squandering his property with prostitutes and barhopping, he felt compassion and rejoiced that we came home. That drives out shame.

What I want to do *this* week is look at what we're to do with fear and anxiety. Before we get going here, let's do this. This is a safe place. It's church. Trust me. You'll find out as this sermon progresses, this is a safe place. How many of you would say fear and anxiety have marked your life at a certain level? Don't be afraid. Look at me. You're not alone.

That in and of itself should be helpful. "Oh, thank God. I was so afraid I was the only one who wrestled with fear and anxiety." That was almost unanimous in here. We have to do something with fear and anxiety, because it is not in line with God's good and right design. In fact, let me show you that. If you're in Genesis, chapter 1, I'm just going to pick it up in verse 28. Here's what we find.

**"And God blessed them. And God said to them, 'Be fruitful and multiply and fill the earth and subdue it, and have dominion over the fish of the sea and over the birds of the heavens and over every living thing that moves on the earth.' And God said, 'Behold, I have given you every plant yielding seed that is on the face of all the earth, and every tree with seed in its fruit. You shall have them for food.**

**And to every beast of the earth and to every bird of the heavens and to everything that creeps on the earth, everything that has the breath of life, I have given every green plant for food.' And it was so. And God saw everything that he had made, and behold, it was very good. And there was evening and there was morning, the sixth day."**

If we get our minds around what has happened at God's good and right design... Now you have the man and the woman, naked and unashamed, in innocence and in honor, living in a world, reigning in a certain way in a world, as viceroys of the King of glory in the image of God in the middle of this garden. Here's the command: "Fill the earth and subdue it." That's called the cultural mandate. "Make the rest of wild Earth look like Eden. Go and build and make laws and build cities and grow. Be fruitful and multiply."

So we have the state of the man and the woman before sin is introduced not only being one of innocence and honor, but also being one of peace and prosperity. There is no death. There is no, "Oh, Adam accidentally fell out of a tree and broke his neck." That doesn't exist. There's no disease. They live in a world where there's nothing but safety. There's no such thing as death. Think about that.

Not only that, but there's no hindrance. We're going to be able to deduce by reading Genesis 3 that you can work hard and it never feel laborious. There's relational unity. He's not getting into a fight with Eve. He hasn't said, "That woman you gave me" yet. Innocence, honor, peace, and prosperity. God's good design. Then Genesis 3. There is a chapter that would be great if it didn't exist. Well, no, it wouldn't be great, because then we wouldn't understand why everything is jacked up.

Let's look at Genesis, chapter 3, starting in verse 19. This is at the end of the pronouncement against Adam. We know some of this also applies to the woman. We know that because women die too. Let's look at this. Verse 19: **"By the sweat of your face you shall eat bread till you return to the ground, for out of it you were taken; for you are dust, and to dust you shall return."**

For those of us who have known nothing but the fallen world, death is a bit scary. For someone who had a moment when death didn't exist, can you imagine the shudder that must have run through their bodies when this is the pronouncement? "For out of the dust you were taken, and to dust you will return." Now all that was peace and all that was prosperous becomes death and decay, becomes fear and anxiety. Fear and anxiety begin to work in the hearts of men and women in a horrific way and, to this day, rob the children of God from the delight in God they should walk in, from the peace and prosperity they should walk in.

Now since I'm using the word *prosperity* and that's a dangerous word, I need to back up a little bit. Let's chat. Yes, God's good and creative design is that men and women were created by God in innocence (guilt

free) and honor (of high value and dignity), and they were given peace and prosperity. But those were not the endgame but rather were an overflow of the relationship they had with God.

So ultimately, innocence and honor weren't an end in themselves but rather flowed freely from an intimate relationship with God. The absence of innocence and honor wasn't because they *did* certain things but because they had been cut off from right relationship with God. So what we're after is not peace and prosperity, but rather to be redeemed and reconciled to our heavenly Father, from whom flows peace and prosperity.

The end goal is God. The end goal is not what God brings about in a life that's reconciled to him, but rather God himself, because God *is* our peace. God *is* our innocence. It's the righteousness of God that redeems us. Not our righteousness...*his* righteousness. *He's* our innocence. *He* is our honor. Our dignity was given to us by God.

We are made in his image. "Male and female he made them." To be prosperous is to be in right standing with God. Prosperity has little to do with money. I'll say that, because I've met some really pathetic, miserable, wicked billionaires. "So how's that brother prosperous?" "Well, he has a jet." And he flies around in it in misery. If you want to call that prosperous, I say your lenses are foggy.

So what are we to do with fear and anxiety, since it marks so many of us? We have to look back at our Father and make sure that relationship is right and let him do work with our fear and anxiety. Now when Jesus goes after fear and anxiety, he does it in a way that really is uncomfortable, so I'm just going to lay that before you. What I mean by that is he wants to put his arm around us and walk us straight *through* fear *to* the other side to point back and show us we didn't really have a lot to be afraid of.

I want to warn you that as we walk through Matthew, chapter 6, we're going to have to walk through some of the things that are kind of scary. You'll feel some, "Oh, don't go there," but we *have* to go there so we can get to the other side, so we can look back and go, "Oh, okay." That's what we have to do. Just prepare your heart. I know some of you are already wishing you wouldn't have come. Too late. Well, I guess you can try to walk. Security, go ahead and bar those doors. (We would never do that. That's a fire code violation.)

Matthew, chapter 6. Let's look at this. We're going to pick it up in verse 25. Jesus will lean in heavy, and he will land compassionately. **"Therefore I tell you, do not be anxious about your life, what you will eat or what you will drink, nor about your body, what you will put on. Is not life more than food, and the body more than clothing?"**

Some of you are like, "Hey, I have no problem with food or clothing, bro. If that's Jesus' illustration, I'm out. I have not gone, 'Oh no! What am I going to eat today?' I *have* gone, 'Oh no, *where* am I going to eat today?' but I have not gone, 'Oh no, *what* am I going to eat?' And I do not care what I'm wearing. I just threw something on and came up here."

We need to unpack that last line Jesus just said, where he begins to talk about the priority by which we look at life, how we value different things. He says, "**Is not life more than food, and the body more than clothing?**" One of the ways Jesus is dialing us in to how fear and anxiety works is by saying, "Be careful what value you give certain things, because the more value you give specific things, the more fear and anxiety will rule and reign around those things." If you hold too tightly to things that shouldn't be held too tightly to, fear and anxiety will mark your life. We'll use some easy ones and some harder ones.

*Money.* Money is important, is it not? Let's be straight. I'm not about to take an offering. Money is important. *Now* people are raising their hands. "Oh, okay. Yeah, it is." We pay rent with it. We buy food with it. We send our kids to college with it. We get vehicles. We get gas. Money is somewhat important in the scope of things. But you'd better not make money *too* important. If you make money too important, fear and anxiety are going to mark your life.

See, when you're talking fear and anxiety, what you're actually talking about is... *Who is the sovereign reigning rule of your life?* If you make money too important, fear and anxiety are going to mark you. That's an easy one. If you make stuff too important... Do you ever notice that when you are broke you don't care about your stuff like you do when you actually have a little bit of change in your pocket and have nicer stuff?

Here's what happened to me this week. I don't think this is fear and anxiety, but I did watch this pop up and went, "Okay, I have to do something with that." We got landscaping done in our front yard. It looks amazing. Until then it was like the jungle. I was just waiting for the Vietcong to pop up at me. It was just bad. We just had it landscaped, and now all of a sudden I don't want the kids running in it. I was like, "Don't play in the beds!"

I didn't care before we got all that done. They were running around, picking up stones, and throwing them. Now I'm like, "Get out of them!" I'm like, "Wait a minute. Why all of a sudden do I really...?" When things increase in value, they begin to matter more to us. You have to be careful. Like if you drive an old hoopty car, you probably don't always worry about every little scratch and every little ding on it, but if you drive a really nice car, you notice those things. "Who did that? Oh, *this* car did that?"

Now do you want to do a hard one? I can make the giggling go away. *Children*. Children are a gift from God. I have a 10-year-old, an 8-year-old, and a 4-year-old, and God didn't owe me any of them. The Bible clearly says children are a gift from the Lord. Has he given me the task of protecting and providing and caring and shaping and leading? Yes. Can I ultimately protect them from all that is dark in the world? Absolutely not.

Listen, parents. To try, even, is to build a resentment in your kids. I mean, you try that helicopter stuff. See what happens. Do you think your kid is grateful that you're hovering over them everywhere they go? Do you think they're like, "Thank you for your care for me"? Do you really think that's what's happening in their hearts? Listen. Your job is to lead them toward adulthood, and adulthood doesn't begin when they're 27 and you finally let them go out on their own.

It's scary to have kids. I'm not trying to say it's not scary. It's terrifying, at some level, to have kids. Yet are we informed by the Word of God that says children are a gift from the Lord, a heritage from God? If you exalt them too much, your fear over them will consume you and rob you from the enjoyment of them and probably suck a lot of laughter out of your house. Hear me. I believe with all my heart that God delights in the laughter of Christian homes. I mean gut laughter, like wake-up-sore, pop-out-a-rib kind of laughter. You should work toward that, daddies. It's not going to make them disrespect you that you're fun.

From there, look at the example he's going to give. He's saying, "Watch your priorities. Watch how you categorize things. When you misplace things, that's called idolatry, and now fear and anxiety are going to grow in your life." Then he wants you to consider something. **"Look at the birds of the air: they neither sow nor reap nor gather into barns, and yet your heavenly Father feeds them. Are you not of more value than they?"**

He's using an example I think is an important example. The default, if we're not careful, is, "Well, I'll just sit back and not do anything. All right, Chandler. If God has my kids, then God has my kids." The default position maybe becomes one of busyness, so I love his illustrations. "Look at the birds." I don't know if you watch birds. My wife has taught me to do this. If there's a redbird or a bluebird... Even now I'm like, "Oh, did you see that bluebird?" My wife did that to me. That did not exist in me before I got married. Now I just spot stuff like that.

"Did you see that redbird?"

"Where?"

"It's over there. Look! No, no, no! To the left, to the left!"

Here's what I've noticed. Birds aren't lazy. How many of you have noticed that? They are not lazy. They are super active. They are building. They are feeding. But here's the thing. They don't have thumbs, and they don't build excessively. You have a refrigerator. Are you tracking with me? How many of you have air conditioning? Is it unanimous in here? We're able to do things other creatures that have not been made in the image of God are not able to do.

The Bible is saying here if God cares for the birds, if God provides for the birds that are of so much lesser value than you are, will he not take care of you? They don't have 401(k)s. Do you know what happens when they get old? They die. Stuff eats them. They get run over by your car. This is what happens when a bird gets older. Yet does not the Lord provide for them, and aren't you of more value than they? So you get this encouragement from Jesus to work hard, be good stewards, and then trust the Lord. Don't be a fool. Be wise, but trust him.

I love the next line, although it's a difficult line. Look at verse 27: **"And which of you by being anxious can add a single hour to his span of life?"** None of us. He literally is saying here, "Quit torturing yourself." Then look where he goes next. **"And why are you anxious about clothing? Consider the lilies of the field..."**

This is where he's going to walk them into fear. **"...how they grow: they neither toil nor spin, yet I tell you, even Solomon in all his glory was not arrayed like one of these. But if God so clothes the grass of the field, which today is alive and tomorrow is thrown into the oven, will he not much more clothe you..."**

That's an interesting line right there. If he spends this kind of care on what's alive today and is gone tomorrow, on the grass of the field that is picked up and thrown into the oven... Not the fire but the oven. I want to try to explain why. In the first century, they made daily bread, which is why when Jesus does the Lord's Prayer he says, "Give us this day our daily bread. Give us our bread necessary to sustain life today."

How did they bake that bread? Not by cutting down a bunch of trees. They would pull up the grass of the field, and they would use that grass, those flowers, to fuel the ovens by which they baked their daily bread. So Jesus, not shying away from the fact that we are most certainly going to die... In fact, at this point, we are 39 minutes closer than we were when we started this service.

We don't know the day and we don't know the hour, and some of us won't see next year. "Stop it, Matt." Some of you will not be alive this time next year. Yet Jesus says here, "If the Lord is so detailed and careful about the lilies of the field and how they're arrayed in splendor, such splendor that they put Solomon to

shame, how much more value are you to him than they are?" Again, this goes back to who we're trusting, who's reigning and ruling over our hearts. You have to read this next line. We're going to do some real talk here on this next line. Look at verse 30 again:

**"But if God so clothes the grass of the field, which today is alive and tomorrow is thrown into the oven, will he not much more clothe you, O you of little faith? Therefore do not be anxious, saying, 'What shall we eat?' or 'What shall we drink?' or 'What shall we wear?' For the Gentiles seek after all these things, and your heavenly Father knows that you need them all."**

When all is said and done, here's the bottom line, before we land on Christ's compassionate response to our day-in and day-out fears and anxieties. He throws out here that the weapon we have been given to fight fear and anxiety is faith that God is ultimately good and reigns and rules over our lives in a way that is richer in wisdom than our own reign over our lives.

This topic is not a topic that's outside the realm of my own personal experience. I put my son in an ambulance and rushed him to the emergency room. I stayed up all night long with a nurse in the Lewisville hospital with cold washrags trying to drive Norah's fever down when she was six months old in the hopes that her fever would come down from 105, in the hopes that she would be all right.

Four years ago I had a seizure that revealed a mass in my right frontal lobe. I had to have a craniotomy. A big chunk of my brain was cut out. I did 18 months of chemo, 6 weeks of radiation. I still am frequently scanned to make sure it's not coming back, because they have said it most definitely will come back. I love the confidence of doctors who have already been wrong once.

When all is said and done, when I'm talking fear and anxiety and faith in God, I am not boldly encouraging you in that direction with no real knowledge of how difficult that is. I have lain in my bed and wondered what it was going to be like. When doctors say, "You have two or three years to live; we're going to fight this cancer with chemo," that doesn't mean, "Hey, the last three years of your life are going to be awesome; get your bucket list ready."

It's, "We're going to poison you and torture you in the hopes of saving you. It's probably not going to work, so you're going to have a miserable two or three years, be almost nonexistent for the third, and then die." "Thanks, doc. That's great news." So then I have to wonder about my kids. Are they going to grow bitter to the Lord? Are they going to grow angry against the King I love so much? Do I have enough life insurance? Is everybody going to be okay? I understand what it's like to lie in bed at night and go, "What's going to happen?"

Just to be really straight with you... For the last four years, almost everyone I have met who was either diagnosed before me or diagnosed after me with similar things to what they diagnosed *me* with has done great. Nobody has died. Everybody has been great. Then just recently, like on a rash... I've done two funerals now for good friends who battled well and then just died.

In fact, two weeks ago, a woman I had become friends with, who was diagnosed four months after me with something very similar, went on home to be with the Lord. I'm just going to be straight. That creates a fresh anxiety in me, a fresh fear in me, that I have to lay before the Lord and just be honest. "God, I need help trusting you here. I know you have me. I know I'm in your hands. Please build my confidence back up in your sovereign goodness and grace."

In fact, one of the most merciful things the Lord ever did to me was allow me to understand that all the control I thought I had was an illusion. As weird as this might sound to you, it was a warm blanket to my soul to finally one night just be lying in bed and go, "God, there's nothing I can do. I just trust you." I mean, what's going to save me? More spinach? Are you serious? Just up my blueberry intake? That's going to drive it out of me? That's going to fix me? No, that's absurd.

I'll be a good steward, but that's not going to rescue what I have. That's not going to save me from what is assuredly coming for me: i.e., death. But who's to say it won't happen today on these slippery, cold roads on the way home? Doctors might be underselling me in the amount of time they're giving me. You know, 7-10 years. I might die today, and then they'd be wrong again. The Lord has marked out my days. My confidence needs to be put in that place.

It is a freeing thing to understand you have no control. Isn't that terrifying for you control freaks? Even now, you're trying to figure out how to control your lack of control. "So if I have no control, how do I control not having control?" You're already starting to try to figure out, "Okay, how do I do this, then? How do I not lose control of the control I don't have?" This just builds fear and anxiety in us. He says, "O you of little faith." The worst thing you can do with fear and anxiety is pretend you're strong and don't have it.

Let's keep going. I want to show you this. The next thing he says here is verse 33: **"But seek first the kingdom of God and his righteousness, and all these things will be added to you."** We have to do something with that text. It is never okay for us to have cliché texts that we haven't actually thought through. Here's what just happened. Jesus just said around food and clothing in particular, or about fear and anxiety as the driving theme, "Seek first the kingdom of God and his righteousness, and all these things will be added to you." We have to do something with that. Let me tell you why.

If you know Christian history, there have been many of our brothers and sisters who have starved to death, either under the wickedness of a tyrannical regime or in some natural drought. Our brothers and sisters have starved to death. We have frozen to death. We have roasted in the desert. So what are we to make with this claim of Jesus Christ? This has to do with posturing. If you're cynical and a skeptic, you go, "See? It can't be true. God won't do that. Let's fuel the fear and anxiety."

Again, I say a lot of things to you over and over again, because I think if they'll take root in you, your shot at joy increases exponentially. Here's what I think we do with this text. Every fear and anxiety you currently walk in, no matter how legitimate or illegitimate... Because there are *legitimate* fears, and then there are *illegitimate* fears that are still painful, still difficult, but there's no real basis in reality for them; we're just kind of like, "Oh, what if that happened?"

In the end, all of them will seem silly 20,000 years from now. Any ounce of anxiety you feel about anything will seem silly 20,000 years from now. Twenty thousand years from now, with the King of glory, looking back on what we were afraid of in this season, it will feel silly to us. That doesn't change the weight of today, but it does grant us hope to believe that seeking first *his* kingdom and *his* righteousness has all of these things added unto us. You will not use God for bread. You will get God, and he will be enough. Sometimes your fear and anxiety will lead you into more of him.

Then we begin to see the compassion of Jesus Christ around this issue begin to take place. Verse 34: **"Therefore do not be anxious about tomorrow, for tomorrow will be anxious for itself."** That is a great line. Here's why. If all of your fears are on tomorrow you have no capacity to enjoy the goodness of God on your life today.

Right now I'm healthy. My three kids are healthy. My marriage is going well. We have very little drama in our world right now, and that's awesome. I don't want to be like, "Well, drama is coming tomorrow. Somebody will jack this up. You can't live in the silver lining of every cloud. Eventually you're going to the dark middle."

No, that's absurd. I just want to be grateful today. I get to spend all day today celebrating the Lord. I get to preach, and then I get to preach again, and then we have a long-time staff member who's transitioning off and rolling up to a church plant in southern Denton, and I'm going to go to her little reception and just celebrate how faithful she has been to the Lord, how she has marked my daughter. Then I get to come back for elder prayer, and then we have a member meeting. All day long I get to be happily tired in the Lord. I want to be grateful for that.

I just got to fly up to Canada and do a large men's retreat. I took my son with me. I got to stand in front of 8,000 Canadian men and fearlessly proclaim the gospel of Jesus Christ, let him see and marvel at that, let him sit next to me, let us have great conversations and sleep in a hotel room together. I got good time with my boy. I just want to be grateful for that.

I don't want to be going, "What if he starts to do drugs when he's 15? How am I going to protect him from idiot kids who might get into his life? How am I going to protect him from Internet pornography?" I want to be where I am and rejoice in the goodness of God right now, because tomorrow has enough trouble for itself.

Here's where you're really going to see the compassion of Jesus Christ lean into us. Look at the very next line: **"Sufficient for the day is its own trouble."** Or if you have the NIV: "Today has enough trouble of its own." Let me tell you why I think that's a super compassionate statement by Jesus Christ. You were just given permission to deal with anxiety and fear today. How do you deal with it? You give it over to the Lord. Today will have fear and anxiety. What do we do? We give that over to the Lord. We lay that down. We don't let that be compounded with tomorrow's trouble. We simply stay in today.

I want to press on you this truth. I think it's going to sting, but it becomes of utmost importance for your joy and freedom from fear and anxiety. The bottom line in most fear and anxiety is you simply don't trust that God is good. Look at me. Don't lie about that. There's no freedom for you if you can't say, "I don't trust that you're good. I don't trust that you have my best interests. I don't trust that you're going to provide for me. I don't trust that you're good enough. I don't trust that you'll be enough for me. So I have to take it and I have to worry about it."

You have to get to the point where you're not pretending that's not in there. It's of no help for anyone to pretend you trust God. You need to say it. You need to let the Holy Spirit break you in your confession of it. Then we can deal with fear and anxiety. Fear and anxiety are never going to lose their power over you until you can be honest about what drives them, namely that you don't trust that God is good.

That should open up a whole other can of issues. Why don't you trust him? I'm guessing something marked you in your past. I'm guessing you've seen some things that make you nervous. I'm guessing you're owning some things you ultimately don't own. You've valued some things beyond what they should be valued. Not that they aren't important; they're just not of utmost importance.

Until you can get to the place where you go, "I don't trust you, God. I don't think you're good. I don't think that, ultimately, you're going to be for my good," we can't move past into letting the Holy Spirit accomplish what he accomplishes when we're finally honest about who we actually are. Jesus says, "Today

has enough trouble of its own." So let's deal with it today. Let's hand it over to the Lord and say, "Help me. I'm fearful here."

So how do we do that? Very quickly, 1 John, chapter 1. There's much in this text. By the way, on this idea of winning the day, just being faithful today to give these things over, I've always loved this verse in Lamentations. By the way, Lamentations is not a book that most people who struggle with fear and anxiety spend a lot of time in, but it's a great book. Lamentations 3:22-23: **"The steadfast love of the LORD never ceases; his mercies never come to an end..."** Did you hear that? His mercies never come to an end. **"...they are new every morning; great is your faithfulness."**

Here's my understanding in my own anxiety, my own fears. I have them. This season has been difficult for me. Not only have I lost two dear friends now, but I have a third who is not doing well at all in his fight with primary brain cancer. I'm watching these friends I've built over the last four years begin to die, knowing I have a scan coming up in January. That's the tomorrow about which I have to go, "Nuh-uh. Not worrying about January. January will be there when I get there in January. My God is already in January. He knows what I'm going to find out." I want to be in today.

So today I'm anxious. I want to trust that God has the mercy and the Holy Ghost has the power to bring me through my fear and anxiety today. I'll go to bed and sleep well tonight, and get up, and there will be new mercy there, because the mercies of God never run out. He's going to give me enough fuel to lay these things down at his feet. Now the *how* becomes important, and that takes us to 1 John, chapter 1, verse 6. This has a lot in it, but I just want to show you the invitation that's existent in it.

**"If we say we have fellowship with him while we walk in darkness, we lie and do not practice the truth. But if we walk in the light, as he is in the light, we have fellowship with one another, and the blood of Jesus his Son cleanses us from all sin. If we say we have no sin, we deceive ourselves, and the truth is not in us. If we confess our sins, he is faithful and just to forgive us our sins and to cleanse us from all unrighteousness. If we say we have not sinned, we make him a liar, and his word is not in us."**

There's a lot in this text. Let me just make it a single line: The Lord's invitation to us, repeatedly, is to walk in the light. Quit pretending to not be scared. You're not a child. You should be man enough and woman enough to go, "I'm fearful about that," even if it's a ridiculous, unfounded fear that you feel you'll be looked upon as being silly for. Is it still weighty? Is it still pressing on your soul?

There are fears that are legitimate fears that have to be dealt with, and then there are fears that haunt most of us that are really kind of unfounded. There's no real objective evidence for it. It's even highly unlikely

it'll even occur, and yet it gnaws at us. The invitation is "Walk in the light." Men, in particular, quit that big-chested nonsense. "Oh, I've got it. You didn't scare me."

"There's yellow urine on your pants."

"Well, that happened before."

No. Be honest. The invitation here is "Walk in the light." Around my own anxieties and fears, I have invited guys into my life and said, "Ask me these questions." My sweet wife will go after my heart ferociously, one of the things I love *and* don't like about her. Like when Stevie died two weeks ago on Friday night, I thought I was doing great. I was like, "Okay, she loved you. She's yours. Her faith has become sight. Praise you that she knew you and that you sustained her through her suffering." Then Lauren was like, "How are you doing, Matt?" I was like, "I'm good."

"No. I mean how are you doing?"

"No. I'm...I'm...I'm good."

"Matt, are you okay?"

"I'm all right."

Then she called Josh and was like, "Hey, will you check in on Matt? He started crying when I asked that." So then Josh called me. "Hey, how are you doing, man? Are you all right?" I want to walk in the light. I want to be open. I want to let you know even today I've been struggling with this lately. The irony of the Holy Spirit is not lost on me that this is what I have to preach on right now. You don't think it hasn't clicked in my head that God is trying to love me well right now in this season to make *this* be what we decided a year ago I'd be preaching on this weekend?

He's good. You can trust him. Walk in the light around your fears and your anxieties. Maybe you still don't feel safe, despite the fact one of the elders has laid his fear and anxiety right before you. So what I thought I'd do is show you another elder who's going to be honest about his journey. Beau Hughes is a dear friend of mine. In all honesty, he's one of the most gifted men I know. I got to be there when we baptized him in the Gulf of Mexico years ago. There are no residual effects of that, which is surprising.

Beau is an elder of this church and the campus pastor up in Denton. Beau Hughes lived from a very early age under a strange sense of fear and anxiety that brought about a deep depression in his life. He began to

be medicated for depression very early. I think he was 8 years old. He has recently tried to come to the end of that and dig around and see what was in that. So I thought it would be helpful not only for me to lay *my* fear and anxiety cards on the table but also to let Beau tell you *his* story. So this is Beau Hughes, campus pastor of the Denton Campus and a fellow elder at The Village.

[Video]

**Beau Hughes:** My name is Beau Hughes. One of the aspects of my story that God has redeemed and is redeeming is that I've struggled for my entire life with depression. When I was 3 years old, I think, my parents began to notice some habits I was exuding in my reactions and in my fits that were a little bit abnormal in their minds. So finally they took me to the doctor, and I think between the ages of 3 and 4, the doctor actually gave my mom an antidepressant.

I didn't really have a framework for what was going on, but once they labeled it and actually said, "You're clinically depressed" and I began to take medication, that label, that name they gave to what I was feeling, was really difficult for me. I hated it. That struggle never really went away. So from 8 years old... I mean, I can remember all the way up into college (I became a Christian my freshman year of college) really struggling. Just the fact I knew something was wrong; I knew something was broken in me.

I continued on in my Christian life. I got married. I actually became a pastor right after I became a Christian. As I grew in my faith and as I began to learn more and more about what causes the sadness of our hearts, what causes the discouragement that so often can cripple us and paralyze us... A couple of years into marriage, I decided to spend a season trying to wean off the medication. "Let's see if there's something more than just biochemistry happening here. Let's see if there's something in my heart that I've never addressed, even as a Christian."

When I got off the medication, it was brutal. Of course, my wife was with me and the elders of the church. They knew what was going on. I was going to see a biblical counselor. It was like when I stopped taking that medicine, I reverted back to the emotional intelligence of an 8-year-old. What I had struggled with at 8 that I had just gotten medication for, all of a sudden at 28, with the medication and the shield it provided covering some of the symptoms removed, it was unbelievably dark. The Lord is not as much intent on taking away the pain as he is on teaching you to trust him through it, which is something I had never done.

**Kimberly Hughes:** It was really difficult watching Beau go through all this. He had a lot of really dark days and was very discouraged and just in a place of, honestly, a lot of times despair. I tried to fix it in a lot of

different ways, and my efforts just weren't working. So I devoted a lot of time to praying for him and surrendering it to the Lord myself.

I had a lot of compassion for him at that time, and the Lord really gave me a supernatural amount of love and care for him. There are definitely still days where he goes into discouragement and despair. I'm able to see those coming normally and get away for a couple of hours and just be with the Lord, even praying for myself, as I don't necessarily often have the patience I did four years ago, just begging the Lord to give me patience with it as well and even compassion and grace for him and his struggle.

**Beau Hughes:** That long season was for a couple of years. I don't even remember when I started to feel some reprieve, but I do remember when I began to trust the Lord more than I ever had before. That was a daily thing, where it felt like two steps forward and one step back. There are still days... Even yesterday was a day where I woke up and that old familiar feeling of discouragement was there, so another opportunity to look to the Lord, to lean on those around me, and to trust him to continue this good work that he started in me, to believe that what he started he'll bring to completion.

[End of video]