

## **The Pain of Fear**

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Zygmunt Baumann, that prophet of modernism and post-modernism, describes in his book, "Moral Blindness", the loss of sensitivity in liquid modernity, that there are three reasons to be afraid in our modern world. The first is ignorance---not knowing what is going to happen and fearing the worst. The second reason is powerlessness-----not knowing what is going to happen and not being able to do anything about it. Finally, we are afraid we will be humiliated for not doing all we could do in the time given us, to help humanity. Each one of these reasons to be afraid carries its own pain with it. There is the pain that surrounds the unknown in our life, which we bury within the distractions of daily living. The fear of the unknown creates a pain of being off balance and wary of investing too much because we are so unsure. This pain we call "unsureness" that can only be healed by entering into the swirl of life, and allowing it to take us forward. Trying to control this fear through finding distractions, only increases the pain, that paralyses us from moving anywhere.

The second reason to fear is a deepening of the first. It is one thing to fear the future because we don't know what is going to happen, it is another to feel the powerlessness that stops us from any action. While the first (unknowing) creates the pain of being unsure of ourselves and life, the second reason (powerlessness) creates the pain of profound shame. Shame always arises in the awareness of our powerlessness. It is different than guilt in that guilt is usually attached to what we did willfully that was wrong and hurtful. Shame creates pain in us because it tells us that we are weak. The only way we can move beyond this pain is to take action against the fear that weakens our resolve to make any change.

In the same way the second reason to fear is a deepening of the first, the third is a deepening of the second. By Baumann suggesting that we are afraid of being humiliated for not doing enough for others, he is moving past the pain of shame to the core of our self-identity, which provides an understanding of our place in the world. When we lose that ability to understand our legacy in the world, we experience the pain of becoming invisible. Yes, there is shame, yes there is unsureness but there is also the pain that we fear we will be forgotten, and in a sense already invisible. It is that pain associated with the fear that we have nothing to give, therefore are in a sense just taking up space.

So why do I mention all these pains and fears. Mainly because they are my fears and pains. I wonder at times, have I done enough. I wonder if I have helped. But most of this is associated with what I see others doing, and feel I am so far behind doing my fair share in this world or our invisible enemy. It is always dangerous to compare ourselves with what others do, and who they are in the deepest part of themselves. Most of us are not good at this exercise. We tend to exaggerate on either side of the coin. We either put ourselves down, or we elevate ourselves. This only increases the problem, which in the end is our paralyses in the face of this overwhelming crisis. Most of us have a bit of the heroic in us. We want to overcome these fears and step into the mess of the world.

As we do, we hope to make difference. When we feel we haven't, there enters the pain that continues to stop us from doing anything.

For me, I have come to accept the limitations of being able to do all the things I wish I could do for others. Right now, I understand the most I can do is to be your pastor, and to write meaningful articles and provide sermons that might stimulate your desire to seek a deeper relationship with God. I have found that accepting our limitations, and working within them, is a way of carving out a meaningful life. Strangely, it is also way of diminishing the pain of my fears. The lesson of this crisis is "just do something" that you can for others, thus diminish the power of the fears in our life. At same time know that you are entering into the life of the world, becoming real and visible for others. The message of John is a poignant reminder, *"There is no room for fear in love; perfect love banishes fear. For fear brings with it the pains of judgment, and anyone who is afraid has not attained to love in its perfection."*