

## The Season of Fear

*There is no fear in love, but perfect love casts out fear;  
for fear has to do with punishment,  
and whoever fears has not reached perfection in love. 1 John 4:18*

*"Nothing is harder to bear than a succession of fair days" Goethe*

I believe there is little doubt that the world is under a cloud of fear, even though we pick up ourselves each day with hope and face the reality of this pandemic. We find it hard to live in the uncertainty of this invisible rain. Life is hard enough without having to negotiate living in an environment that is dangerous to all of us. Zygmunt Bauman writes, *"Living under conditions of prolonged and apparently incurable uncertainty portends two similarly humiliating sensations: of ignorance—not knowing what the future will bring—and impotence—being unable to influence its course."* (pg. 100, "Moral Blindness") His point is well taken. If we knew it would only be a month and all would be over, and we could get back to habits of normalcy, we would be less susceptible to fear. But not knowing, and living so long under these conditions, does take its toll on our spiritual vibrancy.

But there is something we can do to diminish the fear that wants to overtake us---we can turn to love. While Bauman is right in his analysis of the hardship of living in the "impotence" of being able to change our present situation, he has forgotten the spiritual dynamic of love that moves us to others, taking our eyes off ourselves. After all, thinking only about ourselves creates the very fear that we are trying to dissolve. Only love can exorcise the panic we experience in living under these conditions for a prolonged time. John, the disciple, is a much better architect of the spiritual life, than Dr. Bauman. He understands what we need in order to free ourselves from the desperate feelings of living in a pandemic. We need that unique experience of connecting with other human beings who suffer under the same uncertainty.

Think for a moment of the cloud that Jesus lived under for the three years of his ministry. His hardship was knowing how it would end and knowing when. His disciples on the other hand lived under the gift of Jesus' leadership, not knowing what was going to happen. Each perspective of life has its burden, but I would put the greater suffering on Jesus. Knowing what is about to come upon us, with certainty, is a burden none of us can really experience.

While many might say that fear is the master of this season, I believe that John is the real voice of this age--- "There is no fear in love, but perfect love casts out fear." The reason love has the power to cast out fear is because love grows out of the experience of community, and fear grows out of a sense of loneliness. When we are connected with others, we feel their emotions, we can live in their shoes, thereby providing us comfort in knowing we are not alone. Fear grows out of a sense of our isolation, leaving us the feeling that no one is there to help. In this season of fear let us banish our isolation and reach out to each other in the hope of setting loose God's love inside us and give as a gift to those around us.