

First United Methodist Church of Evergreen Park  
October 10, 2021 11:00am worship

\*Please stand

**Prelude**

**Welcome & Announcements**

**\*Call to Worship (Responsive)**

Seek good and not evil; seek the Lord and live!

**May the Lord our God be with us.**

Seek good and not evil, that justice may prevail.

**May the Lord our God show us grace.**

**\*Hymn**

**“God of Love and God of Power**

**Red Hymnal p 578**

**v.1,3,4**

**The Prayer of the Day (Unison)**

**Listening God, hear your church today as we bring our joys and our concerns, our thanksgivings and our demands. Fill us with the assurance that you truly hear our words and thoughts. In the name of the one who always shows us the way, Jesus Christ our Lord. Amen.**

**Children’s Moment**

**The Call to Confession**

God is not far from us. When trouble is near, God is our help and our refuge. Let us confess our sins to God, that we might receive mercy.

**The Prayer of Confession (Unison)**

**God of justice and mercy, we confess that we put ourselves first and trust in things that will not last. O Lord, be gracious to us in spite of our great sin. Teach us to love your justice and share in your mercy. Amen.**

**The Words of Assurance**

We have a great high priest who has passed through the heavens: Jesus, God’s Son, our Savior. In Jesus Christ we are forgiven. **Thanks be to God.**

**Hymn**

**“It Is Well with My Soul”**

**Red Hymnal p 377**

**v.1,2,4**

**The Prayer of Illumination (Unison)**

**Your word, O God, is living and active. May your Word be for us today life and action. In the name of the Living Word, we pray. Amen.**

**Old Testament**

**Isaiah 2:1-4**

**Old Testament p 631-632**

**1** The word that Isaiah son of Amoz saw concerning Judah and Jerusalem. **2** In days to come the mountain of the Lord's house shall be established as the highest of the mountains, and shall be raised above the hills; all the nations shall stream to it. **3** Many peoples shall come and say, "Come, let us go up to the mountain of the Lord, to the house of the God of Jacob; that he may teach us his ways and that we may walk in his paths." For out of Zion shall go forth instruction, and the word of the Lord from Jerusalem. **4** He shall judge between the nations, and shall arbitrate for many peoples; they shall beat their swords into plowshares, and their spears into pruning hooks; nation shall not lift up sword against nation, neither shall they learn war any more.

The Word of God for the People of God. **Thanks be to God!**

**Psalter (Responsive)**

**Psalms 23**

**Red Hymnal p 754**

**1** The Lord is my shepherd; I shall not want.

**2** He makes me lie down in green pastures; he leads me beside still waters;

**3** he restores my soul. He leads me in right paths for his name's sake.

**4** Even though I walk through the darkest valley, I fear no evil; for you are with me; your rod and your staff— they comfort me

**5** You prepare a table before me in the presence of my enemies; you anoint my head with oil; my cup overflows.

**6** Surely goodness and mercy shall follow me all the days of my life, and I shall dwell in the house of the Lord my whole life long.

**5** He who has prepared us for this very thing is God, who has given us the Spirit as a guarantee.

**6** So we are always confident; even though we know that while we are at home in the body we are away from the Lord— **7** for we walk by faith, not by sight. **8** Yes, we do have confidence, and we would rather be away from the body and at home with the Lord. **9** So whether we are at home or away, we make it our aim to please him. **10** For all of us must appear before the judgment seat of Christ, so that each may receive recompense for what has been done in the body, whether good or evil. **11** Therefore, knowing the fear of the Lord, we try to persuade others; but we ourselves are well known to God, and I hope that we are also well known to your consciences. **12** We are not commending ourselves to you again, but giving you an opportunity to boast about us, so that you may be able to answer those who boast in outward appearance and not in the heart. **13** For if we are beside ourselves, it is for God; if we are in our right mind, it is for you. **14** For the love of Christ urges us on, because we are convinced that one has died for all; therefore, all have died. **15** And he died for all, so that those who live might live no longer for themselves, but for him who died and was raised for them.

The Word of God for the People of God. **Thanks be to God!**

**\*Gospel**

**John 14:1-4**

**New Testament p 108**

**1** "Do not let your hearts be troubled. Believe in God, believe also in me. **2** In my Father's house there are many dwelling places. If it were not so, would I have told you that I go to prepare a place for you? **3** And if I go and prepare a place for you, I will come again and will take you to myself, so that where I am, there you may be also. **4** And you know the way to the place where I am going."

The Word of God for the People of God. **Thanks be to God!**

**Sermon**

**Unafraid: Aging, Illness, Dying, and Fear of the Lord**

**Rev Caitlyn Nesbit**

This week is our final week of our sermon series *Unafraid: Living with courage and Hope in Uncertain Times*. I hope you have enjoyed this series as we dug deeper into some common fears, we all have. For the next two weeks we will be having a stewardship series, *All In*, and the following week we will be remembering those who have passed before us with All Saints. Be sure to send any information of a loved one who has passed in the last year into the office by Oct. 13 so we can honor them in the service. For today, we are exploring living unafraid in the midst of aging, illness, dying, and the fear of the Lord. Let's pray and begin.

Prayer.

This morning I would like to start with a story about the life of Siddhartha Gautama, better known as Buddha. Siddhartha was a son of a tribal chief, the member of the ruling class of what is today southern Nepal or northern India. He grew up wealthy, in a palace, sheltered from the outside world. When Siddhartha was a young man, he felt compelled to leave this palace, see his father's kingdom, and meet the people he would someday rule over.

While out on an excursion, Siddhartha saw an elderly man hunched over as he walked. This troubled him, so he asked his charioteer if this evil of old age would come to him as well. Once he learned that old age was in fact the fate of all people, Siddhartha became "deeply agitated" and wanted to return home. Yet, upon returning home, his peace and comfort were still absent.

Siddhartha once again went out to see his father's kingdom. While out this time, he saw a man who had a disease that gave him a swollen belly. His arms hung loosely to his sides, his skin was pale and yellow. The young prince once again asked his charioteer if all people are threatened by illness. Once learning that all people might become ill, Siddhartha became "deeply distressed" and felt all of his joy leave him and wanted to return to the palace.

His father didn't like seeing him so upset upon learning that all people grow old and will get sick. So, before his next excursion, he arranged for the streets to be lined with singer and dangers. He gave strict orders that his son should not see anyone who is sick or aged. Yet once Siddhartha was out on his journey, he saw a dead man that was being carried along by his friends. This was the first time he had seen death up close, so he asked his charioteer if death was something that would come for us all. His charioteer replied that death is the fate of all human beings. This led Siddhartha to ponder the fate of all human beings, struck by the somber truths that we will all grow old, get sick, and one day die.<sup>1</sup>

The fears we have of aging, illness, and death are universal fears, and they are not new. They have been around as long as humanity has. I think they are so prominent because they are the reality, we all face. On day we will all die, we most likely will battle illness at some point, and if we are lucky, we will grow old. Still, there is a way to live that doesn't let these fears conquer us or hold us back. Today, I would like to look a little deeper into each of these fears, then close with how we can overcome them. There is a lot to cover here, so let's strap in and get going.

<sup>1</sup> Hamilton 173-174

Nate and I were recently playing this game he found online where you ask your partner questions to that spark a conversation. And one of the questions was “as a kid, what did you think your life would be like when you grew up. This question made me reflect on how our perceptions of what it means to be old change so rapidly as we age. When I was younger, I thought everyone got married the same year they started college and then began having kids. And that’s your life, you raise your kids and you are old. That is life track of kids in your early 20s is on par for some, but is definitely not what my 20s were like for me. Honestly, I still feel like a kid in my 30s, when before that was soooo old. Nothing makes you feel older than working with youth. When I started ministry at 25, I still considered myself young and cool, but my oh my have I never felt older in my life.

As we age, our understanding of what the threshold for “old” is changes. Yet, even as we age, we still fear the process of aging. We fear that we are becoming less valuable, less able to have meaning and purpose. And our fear of our abilities decreasing becomes more prominent. Yet, this is not the case. God has a long history of calling people to great things later in their lives. Abraham, Sarah, Moses, and Noah were all called by God later in their lives and transformed the path of God’s people. Aging doesn’t prevent us from being called by God, or living meaningful lives. In fact, with aging comes wisdom, and with wisdom comes an understanding of what really matters in life: love. Love of God and love of others. With that understanding, we are able to find a greater sense of happiness.

In his book, Hamilton mentions how surveys have revealed that people who are seventy and older have greater old’s to be happier with their lives than those in their twenties. The odd thing is, both people in their twenties, and people who are over 70, thought it would be the other way around. Aging isn’t something to fear, instead it is entering different season of life with different challenges, sure, but also with different blessings that lead to increased happiness.

Right now, I think a fear that is incredibly prevalent in our lives is the fear of illness. Thank you Covid. Still, this has been a fear before the pandemic, and will continue to be one after it passes. Most of us don’t fear illnesses like the common cold, or even the flu. Although, I blame Web MD for helping us think our symptoms of the common cold, or just normal aches and pains, are terminal illnesses. What we really fear are illnesses like cancer, that have greater odds of fatality, and often require intense treatment processes, changing our lives while we battle them. One of our steps in the FEAR acronym is to examine your assumptions in light of facts. The fact is that not nearly as many people die of cancer of similar diseases as we think. That isn’t to say many don’t fight this battle, but with modern medical advances, it is not nearly as fatal as it once was. If this is a fear that overwhelms you, research the illness you fear and look for how many people in fact DON’T die from it.

Still, there is the reality that we face illness, some with really long roads to recovery or no recovery. In the midst of this time, we can find relief knowing that God walks these paths with us, continuing to call us forward to be a blessing as we journey. When I was a hospital chaplain, the majority of people that I saw were there for only a day, or maybe a few days. My experience affirms the previous perception on illness where we often recover quickly, or at least are not hospitalized very long. I also spent a lot of time with patients who were on the hospice unit.; these patients were often battle illnesses for a long time, most often it was cancer. The aspect that always struck me about these patients was the peace that they would find in knowing God was beside them through everything.

I do not believe that God causes illness. It isn’t some way for God to teach us a lesson or a part of God’s grand plan. What God does do is create good within that pain. Something that the patients in hospice revealed was how seeing where God is in their lives around them in not only comfort, but provides peace. And knowing God is still walking beside us during times of illness allows for us to continue to be a blessing to those around us.

Another fear that we all have at some point in our lives, most of the time we try to ignore that this one will ever happen, is the fear of dying. This is a very natural fear, it is our body’s response, our amygdala’s response, to keep us safe and alive. Which is what that part of our brain does, keeps us safe and alive. Yet, dying is an inevitable part of living. How we are able to overcome this fear changes how we are able to live this life, and this is dependent on what we believe in death.

Hamilton likens death to getting his new iPhone. His old phone was a few years old, wasn’t working as quickly, was dropping calls, and could no longer hold a charge. When he finally went to get a new phone, he got one that not only worked better and faster but also, he was able to upload all of his old data. His contacts, his pictures, everything that was saved to his old phone was now on his new phone. This is similar to the death we are promised through Jesus’ resurrection. As Christians, we believe that we are more than our body, there is also a part of us that extends beyond the physical. When we die, our physical body may no longer be alive but we continue to experience eternal life. I am not sure I believe that we get another physical body right after death, but we the parts of us that make up our personality remain in another form.

This doesn’t mean that we should neglect our bodies or the life that we are given now, we were given these bodies as a gift from God. This life we have is a gift from God. And we are called to us this gift to find ways to love and bless the world and people around us. But it does remain an assurance that this end we fear, this end our bodies very naturally want us to avoid, is not in fact an end. It is a transition. Jesus has died and been resurrected before us so that we may go and prepare the way for us.

Okay, finally fear of the Lord. This is a part of scripture that I always found to be uncomfortable. In our modern faith, we tend to lean heavily on the loving, caring aspect of God. So, fear of the Lord seems like a foreign concept for us. The word “fear” in Hebrew is yirah. Yirah can also be translated as “awestruck”. In this regard, the word is less to fear in the sense of worry that we will be punished or hurt, but rather to be overcome by appropriate reverence and respect.<sup>2</sup> Looking at the earth, all that God has created, all that God does and continues to do, it isn’t hard to hold this reverence for how powerful God is. Its reminder of who God is. As Sister Irene Nowell writes, “fear of the Lord is the awareness that God is God and I am not...I am glad that God is God and I am not.”<sup>3</sup> This fear, or sense of being awestruck, isn’t meant to be that of terror, instead it is an acknowledgment that God is not only all loving, but also all powerful.

Okay y’all, that was A LOT! I want to touch on two aspects that help us overcome the fears mentioned today.

### **1. Recognize all that God has done for us and will continue to do.**

Easter is the most important holiday in our faith as Christians, because it is a time, we celebrate the greatest gift that God could ever give us. The gift of Christ’s resurrection, that defeated death conquered sin and evil, that offers to us eternal life. While we don’t have a clear description of what heaven will look like, we do have the promise that Christ has prepared the way. Our gospel reading this morning says:

*“Do not let your hearts be troubled. Believe in God, believe also in me. 2 In my Father’s house there are many dwelling places. If it were not so, would I have told you that I go to prepare a place for you? 3 And if I go and prepare a place for you, I will come again and will take you to myself, so that where I am, there you may be also. 4 And you know the way to the place where I am going.”*

All of these different fears that come from life can be more than overwhelming. When that happens, remember all that God has done for us. Take a deep breath, inhaling while thanking God for this gift of life that we have been given. Exhale while thanking God for the gift that we have yet to experience.

### **2. Our call is to do what we can with what we have.**

God has done and will continue to do amazing things in our lives. That doesn’t mean we sit back and don’t do anything with this gift we are given. Instead, we are charged to do what we can with what we have. Our epistle reading this morning concludes:

*13 For if we are beside ourselves, it is for God; if we are in our right mind, it is for you. 14 For the love of Christ urges us on, because we are convinced that one has died for all; therefore, all have died. 15 And he died for all, so that those who live might live no longer for themselves, but for him who died and was raised for them.*

Christ’s death for us wasn’t so we can be inactive in the lives we have. It was so we can live in a manner that is free from the fear of death. So, we can live in such a way that no matter what we face, aging, illness, even impending death, we are living for God. I would like to close us with an example of how this can look.

There was a woman in Hamilton’s congregation who was suffering from a debilitating terminal illness that would make it difficult for her to speak or move but would leave her fully conscious. As her illness progressed, she experienced fear of her illness, but found hope and courage through her trust that her life belonged to God and that, ultimately, she was safe in God’s arms. Throughout her illness, her husband someone how developed a way to continue communicating her. While she was hospital bound, she expressed to him that even through her mobility and communication were incredibly limited, she began focusing on praying for others. She noticed the life-flight helicopters landing at the hospital, and whenever she heard a helicopter landing, she would begin praying. In her heart she would pray for the patient, the doctors, the nurses, and the pilots. She overcame her own fears by recognizing where God was at work in her life, and answered that call to be that blessing for others.

Let’s go, and do likewise. Let us close in a word of pray

## **The Prayers of Intercession**

### **The Lord’s Prayer (Unison)**

**Our Father who art in heaven, hallowed be thy name.**

**Thy kingdom come; thy will be done  
on earth as it is in heaven.**

**Give us this day our daily bread.**

**And forgive us our trespasses,  
as we forgive those who trespass against us.**

**And lead us not into temptation,  
but deliver us from evil.**

---

<sup>2</sup> Hamilton 227

<sup>3</sup> Hamilton 228



**OUR CHURCH STAFF**

**Rev. Caitlyn Nesbit, Pastor, [pastorcaitlynnesbit@gmail.com](mailto:pastorcaitlynnesbit@gmail.com)  
Ray Paschke, Accompanist  
Virginia Franson, Nursery Attendant**

**First United Methodist Church of Evergreen Park**

9358 S Homan Avenue, Evergreen Park, IL 60805

Office hours: Monday – Friday 9:00 a.m. – 12:00 p.m.

Email: [fumcepooffice@yahoo.com](mailto:fumcepooffice@yahoo.com)

Telephones: Church: 708-422-8451 /// Pastor: 815-474-3136 cell

Website: <http://evergreenparkmethodist.org>



**First United Methodist Church of Evergreen Park  
9358 S. Homan Avenue  
Evergreen Park, IL 60805  
708-422-8451  
<http://evergreenparkmethodist.org>**



**IN PERSON WORSHIP SUNDAY @ 11 a.m.**