



SOCIAL

The Need to Find Joy
SCOTT CHAPMAN

Week 1: November 12 & 13, 2016

UNCERTAINTY

In this week's message, Scott opened up with an amusing story about a situation he found himself in this past week on the roads of Chicago. Scott was making a left hand turn in a double turn lane when he was cut off. This prompted him to enact Chicago traffic protocol: a honk of the horn followed by a "what gives?" hand gesture. The offending party pulled alongside him and to Scott's dismay, it was a family - perhaps a Chapel family? Scott began to shrink from this awkward moment when he noticed the family - even the little one, with help from an older sibling - was serving Scott with the gesture of all traffic gestures - the bird. Suddenly, the scene became very funny to him. Taking an imperceptible step outside of the moment to see the situation for what it was allowed Scott to have a shift in perspective. Instead of being stuck in a place where he was on defense while the family in the other car was on offense, he chose grace and ended the conflict right then and there.

The tension of Scott's traffic story represents a sort of microcosm for where we are as a nation. In recent years we've arrived at the intersection of grace and conflict many times, and over and over again we've failed to have the right conversations. Now, more than ever, Christians have an epic opportunity to take a posture of humility and extend grace; to be a light in the darkness.

On November 9th, President Obama addressed the media, saying, "Now, everybody is sad when their side loses an election, but the day after we have to remember that we're actually all on one team. This is an intramural scrimmage. We're not Democrats first. We're not Republicans first. We are Americans first. We're patriots first. We all want what's best for this country. ... That's what the country needs -- a sense of unity, a sense of inclusion, a respect for our institutions, our way of life, rule of law, and respect for each other."

I thought President Obama's call to unity was on point, but unfortunately, it rested on a superficial foundation. Our divisions in this country run skin deep, meaning, the only things we can all agree on is that we are Americans. And if you ask 10 people to define what that word means, you might get 10 different answers. As believers in Christ, our unity is defined simply, "our hope is built on nothing less, that Jesus blood and righteousness; we dare not trust the sweetest frame, but wholly trust in Jesus' name."

What would it look like if we moved some words around in Obama's speech to reflect a Christ-centered approach to unity?

Now, everybody is sad when their side loses an election, but the day after we have to remember that we're actually all on the one team. This is an intramural scrimmage. We're not Democrats first. We're not Republicans first. We're not even Americans first. We're Believers first. We all want what's best for humanity...That's what humanity needs - - a sense of unity, a sense of redemption; a respect for our Lord, all of creation, the gift of grace and love for each other.

DISCUSS/JOURNAL:

At some point, or maybe you've been there already, you will have a conversation with someone whose views differ from your own. How can you have a conversation amid tension that honors Christ? .

FEAR

Current events over the last few years have led to a division in this country that we have not seen since the Civil War. Some would argue that President Obama's administration led our nation farther and faster than any other President since FDR. For many Americans, a societal macroevolution of this magnitude was too much, too fast. Ardent Hillary supporters were eager to elect the first woman President and see Obama policy continue. And then you have those who remained undeclared. I spoke with many people who didn't make a decision until the moment they had their ballot in hand.

For a majority of people, this election was less about voting *for* someone and more about voting *against* someone. The unspoken, but mostly outspoken question became "who do I fear more?" Under a Trump presidency, some feared that we would become a nation defined by intolerance and homogeneity; where the economy is controlled by the top 1% and the police force goes unchecked; where deportations are imminent and reproductive rights revoked. Under a Clinton presidency, some feared that Americans would be ushered into war - both at home and abroad; that the homeland we know and love would become unrecognizable as a socialist welfare state; that Christianity would be marginalized and even criminalized. Everyone started to fear each other, and this is how we became so tragically divided.

Scripture talks about two kinds of fear - the Fear of the Lord, which is an expression used to indicate a reverential awe of God, one that leaves us breathless and humbled by his great love and mercy. The second is counterfeit fear; a state of panic that leaves us indignant, gasping for air and grasping for control. Remember that when God creates something for good, the enemy looks to hijack it for his own purposes. The Holy Spirit does not bring about "little f" fear - this is the enemy's work, planting the seeds of doubt that will bring forth a harvest of strife and suffering in our lives.

When people become gripped by fear it robs them of love and joy and peace. Fear causes people to act erratically and make questionable decisions. Fear, like its antidote, Love, can be easily recognized by its actions:

Love

Other Centered
Give
Hope
Uniting
Freedom

Fear

Self-Centered
Take (afraid to lose)
Suspicious
Dividing
Bondage

DISCUSS/JOURNAL:

Which list best describes the mood of our country right now? Which list best describes you right now? Why?

Read the following verses from scripture about how we can be strengthened when fear threatens to take us down. Circle the one that speaks loudest to you. Listen to the people around you who are experiencing great fear right now and give them a good Word from the list below.

Isaiah 41:10 Fear not, for I am with you; be not dismayed, for I am your God; I will strengthen you, I will help you, I will uphold you with my righteous right hand.

2 Timothy 1:7 For God gave us a spirit not of fear but of power and love and self-control.

1 John 4:18 There is no fear in love, but perfect love casts out fear.

Psalms 27:1 The Lord is my light and my salvation; whom shall I fear? The Lord is the stronghold of my life; of whom shall I be afraid?

John 14:27 Peace I leave with you; my peace I give to you. Not as the world gives do I give to you. Let not your hearts be troubled, neither let them be afraid.

Deuteronomy 7:21 You shall not be in dread of them, for the Lord your God is in your midst, a great and awesome God.

Psalms 56:3 When I am afraid, I put my trust in you

HOW DO WE MOVE FORWARD FROM THIS PLACE?

Luke 11:5-8 (HCSB) 5 He also said to them: "Suppose one of you has a friend and goes to him at midnight and says to him, 'Friend, lend me three loaves of bread, 6 because a friend of mine on a journey has come to me, and I don't have anything to offer him.' 7 Then he will answer from inside and say, 'Don't bother me! The door is already locked, and my children and I have gone to bed. I can't get up to give you anything.' 8 I tell you, even though he won't get up and give him anything because he is his friend, yet because of his friend's persistence, he will get up and give him as much as he needs."

We need to remember who we are. Read **John 17:20-23**. Jesus prayed that all believers would be unified. As follower of Christ, we have way more in common that unites us in Christ than what divides us

in the world. You might not understand why people of color have fear or are angry. Our brothers and sisters in Christ are losing faith in what they thought America (and the church) was supposed to be. Hating people in the name of Jesus is indefensible. We need to:

- Oppose racism where we find it
- Ask people of color how they are doing
- Examine our hearts and confront the racism that resides in our own hearts

We are Christians first. As believers in Christ, we should not be divided by politics. Jesus is not politically affiliated - he's not even an American. On earth, Jesus was middle eastern, brown-skinned Jew. Our Christianity should never become an extension of our nationalism. When we confine Jesus to labels like American, Republican, Democrat - we've polluted the well and created an idol. Christ transcends ideologies. When we make our primary identity and unity in Christ, we will be able to go back and forth across party lines because our allegiance is to Jesus Christ.

You need to Fill your cup. We need to cling to the truth that love is greater than fear (**1 John 4:18**). Believers do not have to live in fear. God is Love (**1 John 4:8**) and so God is the antidote to fear. Imagine two glasses of water. One glass is the size of a drinking glass and is filled with dark liquid (fear). The second glass is more like a pitcher - and it's filled with cool, clean water (God). When your cup is full of fear, the only thing that can spill over is fear. You can put a cap on it or a towel over the cup and try to hide the fear, but when something disruptive come along, the cap or cover will ultimately fall off and expose the hidden fear. The Bible says that if we are open to God's love, He can change that. As we allow Him to pour into us, we will eventually see Him displace the dark liquid, and this time when something big happens fear doesn't spill out - love does. Go to Jesus, spend time with him. Let Him fill you up.

Be salty. Read **Col 4:2-6**. We are called to love no matter what. We are called to be wise. We are challenged to make the most of every opportunity that comes our way and to have faith that God will show up and do something good. Bring grace with you wherever you go. We live in a world that needs grace. Be mindful of how people outside the church are doing. Show up, step up and bring a little grace with you wherever you go. Our culture is ripe. Christians will be marginalized closer and closer toward the fringes. But this is not a moment to shrink back in fear. Want the good news? This mean we have great opportunity. Don't deliver on people's assumptions of you. Don't be the way the world characterizes you. Surprise people with Jesus love.

DISCUSS/JOURNAL:

"It matters far more who sits on the throne of Heaven than who sits in the Oval Office." What does this statement encourage in you? Is it a thought, an action, an idea?

Take a few moments to pray for Donald Trump and for those who are hurting in our nation. Place your hope in the throne of Christ. No matter where you align politically on earth, you have a King in Heaven.

Commit to taking a few minutes each day this week to fill your cup. Spend some time with the Lord and ask Him to help you identify the pollutant fear in your heart and then give it over to Him to redeem. Journal your journey so you can see progress as it plays out.

PROVIDE US WITH FEEDBACK

We are excited about the potential these studies have to help each of us process the weekend message at a deeper level, and to see God change our lives in significant ways. In order to make these guides as helpful as possible, we would love to hear which elements are most helpful, which are least helpful, as well as any other comments, questions or suggestions. Feel free to send your feedback directly to Jon Holmberg at jonrholmberg@gmail.com.

We are looking for writers! If you this is something you feel God is putting on your heart and you are hesitant to make the first step or just don't know how to make it happen, give me a call and we can discuss! Email me, Jon Holmberg, at jonrholmberg@gmail.com.

REFERENCES