



Another excerpt from **Humans**:

"I grew up in Spain right after the civil war. When I was eleven I was sent to a Catholic boarding school. They fed me and sheltered me. But they only taught me religion. They were training me to be a priest. I was taught to fear God. I was taught to fear the outside world. I was taught to fear everything. I left the grounds one day when I was twenty-eight. I went to a barbershop and got my hair cut by a Frenchwoman. I had never really spoken to a woman before. She told me I was cute. That same day I bought a newspaper. It was the first time I'd ever bought something with my own money. When I returned to the school, I was changed. I had discovered freedom. I began to realize their lies and so I wasn't useful to them anymore. A few months later I met a woman in church and fell in love. We got married and had three children. I left all of it behind, except for the fear. I still feel very afraid for no reason. That will always be a part of me." (Montevideo, Uruguay)

All of us have felt afraid at some time in our lives. The reasons vary; but we all know what fear feels like. I've often told the story of my eleven year old self on a small motor boat on Lake Erie on July 4, 1969 when one of the most famous storms in the city's history hit. Fear gripped each one of us because we honestly didn't know if we were going to survive. And I will never forget the terror in my son's voice the night he called from Las Vegas as he was taking cover from the barrage of bullets being rained down on concert goers in what became the worst mass shooting in our nation's history.

Fear seems to come at certain times and under very specific - or even personal - circumstances. Over time we learn to process them and manage them in ways that prevents them from paralyzing us. It took me awhile to get back in a boat, and even longer to venture out into Lake Erie, but eventually I learned that I could be safe, both on a boat and on the lake. My son has since traveled to Las Vegas several times and has attended many concerts. So I wonder if we can even begin to imagine what it is like to **always** feel afraid, to live with the kind of pervasive fear described by the man in the story, and how much work it might take to move through each and every day with at least some sense of safety and security.

I'm reminded of the time when Jesus and the disciples were on a boat. Jesus was asleep in the stern when a vicious wind whipped up sending violent waves crashing into and over the boat.

The disciples were afraid and quickly woke Jesus who was apparently a very sound sleeper. They said to Jesus, "Don't you care if we drown?" I guess the disciples could be pretty sarcastic when they were emotionally overwhelmed. Jesus rubbed the sleep from his eyes, climbed to the deck of the boat, and commanded the waves to be still. The gospel writer Mark tells us that "the wind died down and it was completely calm."

And then Jesus said, "Why are you so afraid? Do you still have no faith?" (You can read the entire story in Mark 4:35-42.) I think of this verse often, especially now when so many things can cause us to be afraid. I know intellectually that I don't have to be afraid because Jesus is with me, and so when I falter I find myself questioning the strength and resiliency of my faith. That's something I have to keep working on.

What are you afraid of these days? Whatever it is, know that Jesus is present in the midst of your fear. And pray - as I seem to be doing more frequently - for the faith to truly know and believe that we are always being held in the arms of a merciful God.

Pastor Chuck

Let us pray.

Lord, sometimes we feel afraid in the tough times of life. Sometimes the darkness overwhelms us, and we grow discouraged as we face the uncertainties of life, trials and temptations, or scary attacks from both within and without. Help us remember that we are not alone in our battles. We can count on your presence wherever we go, and rely on the power and provision of your presence in our times of deepest need. Thank you for being near, and for walking with us every day. Amen.