

## **“The Only Thing We Have to Fear...”**

**John 14:23-29**

Preached by Dr. Robert F. Browning, Pastor

First Baptist Church

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### **Communion Devotion**

Franklin Roosevelt was elected President during one of the most frightening periods in American history. The Great Depression was raging, and unemployment was at an all-time high. Fear had gripped the nation, and the future looked bleak.

Perhaps the most memorable line from his first inaugural address on March 3, 1933, was, “The only thing we have to fear is fear itself.” That line has been quoted many times by leaders trying to instill courage and confidence in the hearts of frightened people.

Fear was on the minds and in the hearts of the disciples the night Jesus gathered with them in the Upper Room to observe the Passover Meal. He sensed it and completely understood why.

The disciples knew Jesus’ life was in danger because the authorities were looking to arrest him. For some time this had been their goal, and they were determined to succeed. Even that night Jesus told them he would be with them only a little longer in an attempt to prepare them for what was coming.

**What were the disciples afraid of that evening?** They feared for Jesus’ life and their own safety. Just days before when Jesus told them they were going to Bethany because Lazarus was gravely ill, Thomas uttered those immortal words, “Let us go and die with him.” Thomas knew they could not get that close to Jerusalem and remain safe.

Even if they didn’t die with Jesus while in Jerusalem, what would the future hold? Could they continue the work Jesus began? Did they have what it would take to accept this challenge? They were unsure, and Jesus was fully aware of their lack of confidence and fear.

**What strikes fear in your heart this morning?** What is threatening you and undermining your confidence? What is keeping you awake and making you restless?

Is someone you depended upon gone, which means you must chart a new course? Are you facing an intimidating challenge and unsure if you have what it takes to succeed? Have you received a bad health report which leaves you wondering what the future holds? Are you facing unexpected expenses with no money to cover them? Do you have a child whose life is spinning out of control and headed for a crash?

**What do you think Jesus wants you to know as you gather around this table?** What did he want the disciples to know the evening they gathered in the Upper Room?

Above all, I believe he wanted them to know they were not alone and never would be. The Father was prepared to send another Advocate, the Holy Spirit, who would reside in their hearts and walk alongside them providing the same things for them Jesus had.

God as Spirit would console them when they were grieving, guide them when they were confused, strengthen them when they were weak, remind them what Jesus had taught them when their memory failed, reveal to them the deepest truths about life and faith, give them confidence and courage when they struggled with feelings of inadequacy, grant them hope when they were reeling in despair, open doors of opportunity when they were facing dead ends, forgive them when they sinned, help them rebuild their lives after their dreams were shattered, and give them peace when they were restless by walking with them every step of their way.

“Peace I leave with you; my peace I give to you. I do not give to you as the world gives. Do not let your hearts be troubled, and do not be afraid.”

I am drawn to the contrast Jesus mentioned between the peace he was giving them and the peace the world offered. What was that difference? For me, it is this.

The peace of Christ was not the absence of difficulties, conflict, temptation, challenges, turmoil, pain, disappointment, or want. Instead, it was the presence of someone, the Living God, who would be their constant companion and encourager.

The peace of Christ was not found in things which could be here today and gone tomorrow, but a relationship with a loving God who would always be with them, and faithful friends who would accompany them on their journey of faith. In these eternal and endearing relationships, they would find confidence, courage, direction, hope and peace.

**Is this what Jesus wants you to know?** Is this what Jesus wants to give you this morning? Is this what you need as you gather around this table?

If so, will you invite the Holy Spirit into your heart and let the Spirit accompany you on your journey? Will you seek God's will as you draw close to the Spirit through meditation, prayer, worship, study and service?

**Will you ask God to help you be this kind of friend to someone who needs your companionship?** Will you let the Spirit use you as you draw close to those around you and seek to support and encourage them?

"The only thing we have to fear is fear itself." This really is true as a follower of Jesus. Let's talk to the Lord about this as the bread and cup are passed.