

Text: Mark 4:3-9, 13-20

Title: "Fear Strikes"

Introduction: A couple weeks ago, we started our series, "Stamping Out Poverty" as we talk about money. Yep, money! Jesus spent a solid 2/3 of his teaching time (according to our Scriptures) talking about money and possessions ... I'm just going to spend a few weeks a year doing it.

Now, when we talk about poverty, we are talking about it in two ways. First, we know that there are materially impoverished people in this world. Why do we care? Because Jesus said, "what you do to the least of these you do to me." Remember, "I was naked and you clothed me ... I was hungry and you gave me food ... I was in prison and you visited me..." So, we are called by God to take care of those who struggle to care for themselves, in our neighborhood and around the world.

The second way we are talking about poverty is about us. When it comes to money, many of us, according to our Scripture, are impoverished emotionally, spiritually and mentally. We don't know how to think, feel and act with our finances according to God's Word.

Two weeks ago we talked about the Poverty of the Spirit, which is fueled by the "Cancer of Selfishness". Today we are going to talk about breaking down another obstacle to 'Biblical Financial Health'; the Poverty of the Mind. Sometimes the way we think about money gets in the way of our relationship with God. We don't get to experience all that God wants for us, because we think we know more about how to handle money than God does.

Before we go any further, let's pray together.

PRAY!

I invite you to take the insert out of your program. On one side you will find our Scripture for today and on the other you will see a brief outline with some space for notes. I encourage you to grab a pen, because most of us need to change the way we think when it comes to our finances.

I know, some of you are thinking that you've got the whole money and finances and saving and credit thing figured out. You know deep down in your heart that you can trust your money to take care of you. We can trust our money, can't we? We can see it, we can feel it, and we know how to use it. Money is stable! How many of you have watched the stock market in the last year? RIGHT! GRAB A PEN!

Here's what I believe: I believe that Jesus Christ did not come and die on a cross so that you and I could have average lives. Our Scripture says that Jesus came to "Save" us. Another way of saying "saved" is to say that we are made "whole". I believe that wholeness in every area of our lives is what Jesus wants for you and me! We will experience that wholeness in our lives when we start to learn how GOD THINKS...

Let's start with our Scripture...

READ MARK 4:3-9, 13-20!

How many of you here want to be fruitful? How many of you want to be part of the group who falls on good soil and gets to bear multiples of fruit and have a 30x ... 60x ... 100x lifestyle? We are talking 'multiplication'. GREAT!

In Mark 4, Jesus lets us know that our fruitfulness in this life depends on several factors. We are going to talk about three (3) main factors to bearing good fruit...

I. **Begin with the Right Seed: GOD'S WORD**

When Jesus is telling this story about the farmer scattering seeds, he is using seeds as a metaphor for God's Word or God's Message ... the Good News to humanity. So, in order for you and I to be fruitful in this life, we must start with the Right Seed: GOD'S WORD.

Here's what Jesus tells us ... As the Word of God is spoken or read, people fall into four categories...

V.15 = "Seed that fell on the path ... birds came and ate it". These are the people who don't even get out the door here on Sunday morning with anything. It's like they are not wired up to hear God's Word and let it sink in. These people sit in worship and think about everything they are going to do this afternoon or this week ... or they just sleep. Let 'em sleep ... they'll get more out of some good rest than they will from God's Word!

V. 16-17 = "Seed fell on shallow soil... sprang up quickly ... quickly wilted" for lack of depth. I've seen so many people like this. These are the people you are looking around for today. They were so fired up about their faith a few weeks/months/years ago, but they are no longer in any church or bible study. Discipline is hard and in order to be a Disciple of Jesus, we have to have discipline ... a "stick-to-itiveness". When the going gets tough (persecution, people questioning your faith), they leave!

V. 18-19 = "Seed fell among thorns ... choked out". These are the verses that we are focused on today. This is where our minds come in. We get caught up in our Poverties of the Mind ... we think that we can think better than God can think!

Three things that catch our minds and drag us outside of God's desires for us:

1. Worries / Cares of the World ... how can I possibly make ends meet ... I'll do it my way!
2. Lure of Wealth ... I want to spend all my time making money for me!
3. "Desire for nice things" ... focused on own agenda / greed.

V. 20 = We hear God's Word (Seed) and we live life like we've heard it ... and we do it for the long haul! God sows the Seed. Will we act on it and produce a 30x, 60x, or 100x lifestyle? Will we multiply what God blesses us with like God hopes for us?!?

So, the question is: "Do we sew God's Seed in our financial lives?" Here is what the "Seed" says about finances:

- A. ability (deuteronomy 8:15-18)

1. Moses is talking about how God made sure the Israelites did not forget that they were in the Promised Land and thriving there, because God did it!
 2. God brought them through the wilderness and they were able to become rich in the Promised Land, because that's what God 'PROMISED' ... Not because of their own doing.
 3. God makes wealth possible for us too. God gives us power and wisdom to figure out how to do it ... you did not create your brain and your talents and your skills ... God Did!
 4. Our Ability comes from God.
- B. trust (luke 16:10-11)
1. Whether we have a little or a lot, we are to build trust with God by doing the right/Word thing with what we've got in our hand!
 2. don't ask for more blessing until you are doing what God wants with what you've got!
 3. Can God trust you to use what He gives for His Kingdom?
- C. value (proverbs 11:25)
1. What is the value of wealth? How does God measure wealth? How do we build TRUST with God?
 2. The value of wealth is measured in GENEROSITY.
 3. When we refresh others, we will be refreshed ourselves!
 4. Get it? Give to those in need. "What you do for the least of these..." and we will be refreshed in this life!
- D. priority (matthew 6:33)
1. We talked about this last week ... Make God's Kingdom your priority. Then, you will show God that you have faith in Him.
 2. Have you ever noticed how important our eyes are? If you are blind or have lost a measure of sight, you know what I'm talking about.
 3. Our brains process what our eyes see and it becomes engrained in us.
 4. My question is: What are your eyes on? Your own way of doing things or God's Kingdom? The worries of this world, or God's Kingdom?

II. Deal with Weeds: OUR MIND

Well, according to our Scripture for today, a second factor that our fruitfulness depends on is how we deal with WEEDS!

How many of you garden ... past or present ... how many of you garden?

I remember when I was a kid, my parents were pretty good gardeners. My Dad was raising five kids on a pastor's salary, so it was wise to grow some of our own food. My Mom was a master canner ... beans, tomatoes, tomato soup (awesome), squash, etc. If they could grow it, Mom could preserve it or use it!

When we had gardens, guess who got to help with the weeding? If you've gardened, you know this ... you can't wait to weed! If you wait, it's too late. You start to lose plants ... good seed! You have to weed almost constantly!

Bad stuff tries to attach itself to every area of your life constantly! As Christians, there is a constant effort to weed... Those who don't know Christ don't know it, but they are just cultivating weeds, not good plants ... not fruitfulness! "Wow! Look what I've got!" and they are holding a bushel of thistles!

You know there are many people who attend churches who believe in God, but their real faith is in their money. Again, they can touch it and see it, so they trust that. Many people THINK that happiness and comfort come from personal wealth accumulation! They TRUST money.

How much money have you lost over the last year because of our economy?

- A. proverbs 11:28 – Do we want to go down with our money clenched in our fists or do we want to flourish?
- B. i timothy 6:17 – Are we hearing the Word/Seed? Will we let those words fall on the path, among the weeds, in shallow soil or in good soil?
- C. matthew 19:16-30 – *Tell the story of the rich young man...*
 1. Young man kept all of the Commandments ... "What else must I do to follow You?"
 2. Jesus gave three instructions:
 - a. Sell – all you have
 - b. Give – to the poor
 - c. Come – follow Me
 3. The one Commandment that the young man couldn't keep was the first one ... "You will have no other gods before Me."
- D. john 6:11-13 – *READ what Jesus did for the 5,000 ...*
 1. We think we know what to do with our money, but that's just us and our NATURAL abilities...
 2. When we allow Jesus to take our money and our stuff, SUPERNATURAL stuff happens!
 3. I'm not sure I just want "natural" when it comes to my finances ... I want God to use that part of my life for the "supernatural" to happen for God's Kingdom. I want to listen to God's Word / Seed!
- E. ephesians 1:18-20 – *Read it!*
 1. I think that I want that kind of power in every area of my life.
 2. What about you?

III. Fertilize the Root: OUR BEHAVIOR

The 3rd factor that we need to understand in order to be fruitful is the fertilizer! Once we get the seed in the right type of soil, we have to fertilize it ... we have to do our part to make it grow!

In order to fertilize the Seed of God's Word, we have to act on it! *It is OUR BEHAVIOR that activates our faith, not our mental belief (repeat)!* We can believe stuff about Christ in our heads, but it does not become faith until we DO SOMETHING with it! Until we live God's values, we don't experience God's blessings.

Have you all noticed that "Catalogue Season" is open? Is it Sears that calls it a "Wish Book"? I used to love that as a kid. I used to play "If you could only have one thing on this page, what would it be?" ...Every page!

- A. emotional wealth – Our Financial health is tied to our emotional health
 1. Sometimes we think that buying something (shopping) is therapy.
 2. But, our emotional wealth increases when we think about the things that make us truly feel like we are in heaven.
 3. When I looked in the rear-view mirror of our van this past week driving to KY and I saw my four beautiful girls laughing and talking ... heaven!
 4. Our emotional wealth increases when we REMEMBER what God has blessed us with...
- B. biblical priorities – remember that our Scripture from Proverbs said our wealth is measured in Generosity!
 1. What if we did it different this year? What if as families we sat down and, instead of talking about what we wish we had, we took time to thank God for what we ALREADY have?
 2. This week is Thanksgiving. Instead of focusing on what you want, focus on what you have and how God has blessed you.
 3. Then, as we head toward Christmas, instead of thinking and focusing on what stuff we want, as a family, focus on what someone else NEEDS. Kingdom of God stuff.
 4. Orphans this Christmas – Needs.
- C. a future focus (romans 13:8a / proverbs 22:7 = read 'em)
 1. We have to find a way to stop working today to pay for yesterday. We have to get out of debt if we are going to be one of those 30x, 60x, 100x benefactors of God's blessings.
 2. If we procrastinate (understand that I'm preaching to me too), we will reap what we sow. The more we wait to get out of debt the more we pay the past instead of God's intentions for our future.

3. Go home this week and add up all your debt. Start with the credit cards (highest interest 1st) and snowball them. There are “get out of debt” websites out there such as www.daveramsey.com.
4. Then 10-10-80. 10% to “home storehouse” (church), 10% to savings and 80% to live on. We have to learn to live on 80% of what we earn if we are going to be fruitful for God’s Kingdom.
5. Stock Market = 12% increase over any 40 year period. Have to take advantage of that. If you need help, we have finance people as part of this church that will help you!
6. Remember, if we want to be refreshed, we are to refresh others. Contrary to popular belief, “Personal Wealth and/or Comfort” is not what this life is all about! Those who accumulate great personal wealth are seldom “Comfortable” ... stress and desire for more...

Jesus did not die on a cross so that we could just survive. He desires for us to THRIVE. But, it’s a matter of the heart! I want to be part of the 1 in 4 people who hear God’s Word, Weed out the fears of this world, and fertilize God’s Word with my Behavior ... 30x, 60x, 100x lifestyle for the Kingdom of God.

Let’s Pray!

Grace Home, Chennai, India

86 children (this includes 76 full-time residents and 10 more hangers-on-- that is transitional children who will probably become permanent but should be included for the sake of this discussion.)

The children basically have come to the end of their school uniforms. In India one must have a school uniform to attend school. This is a very strict requirement and I have known of many, many children who do not ever attend school simply for the want of a uniform. Apparently the uniforms are tattered and ill-fitting and it is about a year past time to replace them all. Paul and Grace-- our directors there--generally arrange to have the clothes made by hand in India. This is cheaper and better for sizing and meeting the school requirements. By the way we are sending some clothes but they are not of specific sizes and are not uniforms.

The cost to provide two uniform outfits for each child is \$16 (\$8 each) It sounded cheap to me but she assured me that it can be done and they have done it that way in the past.

The shoes--are rugged sandals after the Indian fashion and then a dressier version--and are also inexpensive compared to here: \$10 (\$5 each pair).

So basically it is \$26 per kid to outfit them for school for about a year. It was mentioned that there have been some incidents with teasing and bullying because of the present condition of some of their uniforms. Also, the absurd suggestion that medical checkups be postponed in order to use some of the money for purchasing uniforms. I would never allow this, so don't worry--that won't happen but it shows how badly they need the clothes. So that would be about \$2236 for the whole group (\$26 x 86).

I know Sarah has in the past wanted pictures so people can really see what has been accomplished and I already mentioned that to them and I think this is a project--should you choose to proceed--where we will be able to get a lot of good photos of the children.

By the way-- this is the same orphanage that Rom's church has taken an interest in. Though I haven't heard back from them about sponsoring this home, I expect they will do something. Interhope is sending quite a lot every month from our general budget and it is still very much under-funded.

Potential Project #2

Elephant Mountain Orphanage, Siem Reap, Cambodia

36 Children

The orphanage needs a water storage tank. Right now the only source of water for the children and staff is an external well with a hand pump. The children grow a lot of their own food and keep farm animals as well. Right now the children spend about an hour each day-- and more in the dry season--carrying water to the crops, animals, and for use inside the orphanage. In this region of Cambodia most structures (the vast majority) do not have indoor plumbing or running water. This is normal for their society at this time-- horrifying to us but normal for them. However, a water tank and motorized pump would allow storage of water so that the children would not have to spend so much of their time carrying water. They already have a huge number of chores.

This is hard for us to imagine but it is a very important need and it has been mentioned to me repeatedly and now when I asked again about something other than ongoing expenses this is the most pressing thing.

As for the cost, there is quite a lot of grading to be done and concrete supports for the tank and pump plus the cost of those items. We don't know how much really, but I got estimates at around \$4500. It would transform the daily routine of everyone at the orphanage. Should you choose this project, I will probably put some Interhope funds with whatever you might get together to improve their bathroom facilities which are primitive. Amazingly, the bathrooms were not cited when I asked for their most pressing need though. I am always concerned about Cholera after the outbreak that happened some years ago at Shepherd's House. I am for modern bathrooms.

The funds you send from the church are already used to feed and care for these children and to make possible all the projects of Interhope so you are already very much involved with these homes but if you want a concrete project with a beginning and an end I think these are very compelling.

By the way, the Christians of India are being severely persecuted at this time. Some of this has come close to our people there and many of their relatives and loved ones are directly impacted.