

**ALDERSGATE UMC OF BUTTE, MT**  
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Living into a More Beloved Community  
Through Oneness With God

**Message**

Spiritual Amnesia

Pastor Matthias

Have you struggled lately feeling lost?  
Have you struggled lately feeling lonely?  
Have you struggled lately knowing the presence of God?  
Have you struggled lately on who you are?  
Have you struggled lately knowing whose you are?  
Have you struggled lately with fear and insecurity?

Since we are all human, I suspect that we have answered yes to one or more of these questions. Yes?

Many of you know how much I enjoy cartoons to illustrate a point and this one, well, I will let it speak for itself from the story of David and Goliath:



There are two basic human emotions that we experience on an ongoing basis: *love and fear*. Now to some degree fear is helpful and useful in

dangerous situations in which we need to react in order to be safe or to help another to safety. Fear can be an ally if the fear does not paralyze us where we are incapable of reacting in a crisis situation.

I listened to a podcast on National Public Radio on this very subject and scientists are studying about 400 people they have identified around the world who are incapable of feeling fear. This condition is a very unusual disease called Urbach-Wiethe disease. Urbach-Wiethe has three main symptoms. People with this disease have an extremely hoarse voice, small bumps around their eyes, but also the disease leads to these deposits in the brain. Deposits of calcium, little stones in certain parts of the brain. And one part in particular is a favorite for those deposits, and that is the amygdala. The amygdala are two almond-shaped structures deep in the brain critical for the processing of fear. And in one particular patient of this study is someone they call SM. S.M. 's brain, her amygdala were completely calcified. But here was SM, alive and also completely normal in other ways. She had normal intelligence and no problem with any other emotion. But as the scientists shared, living with absolutely no fear is dangerous.

On the one hand, some might think how awesome it would be not to feel fear. On the other hand, it could inhibit how we protect ourselves and others who come into dangerous situations. We need fear to a certain point to live more fully in a wonderful and yet precarious world.

However, as I said earlier, a certain amount of fear is normal and natural in our being human, but too much fear creates:



When we are gripped by fear because of what is happening in our world and in our communities, we can forget who we are and whose we are!

Our scripture passage for today speaks again to something that can severely reduce the amount of fear we live with on a daily basis. The gospel of John is the most mysterious and mystical gospel in our New Testament. We hear this passage of scripture with our ears, but do we hear it with our hearts? Let's take a second look at our scripture passage for today:

20 'I ask not only on behalf of these, but also on behalf of those who will believe in me through their word, 21 that they may all be one. As you, Father, are in me and I am in you, may they also be in us, so that the world may believe that you have sent me. 22 The glory that you have given me I have given them, so that they may be one, as we are one, 23 I in them and you in me, that they may become completely one, so that the world may know that you have sent me and have loved them even as you have loved me.

No doubt some of you know this *Oneness with God* and when I say know, this means you can feel it. And when you can feel it there are some things that replace the fear and anxieties of everyday life. For example, when you know and feel this Oneness with God through Christ, something shifts within your being and fear is no longer dominant in your life. Instead there is a peace that surpasses all understanding that permeates the way in which you live and move and have your being. Furthermore, there is a joy that goes beyond mere happiness. As I have said before, joy goes beyond happiness and is not dependent on how well things are going in your life. Joy runs deeper.

When Jesus was trying to console his followers after telling them he would no longer be with them and that he would be going to the Father, they were distressed and this is what Yeshua had to say to them in John 16:20-22:

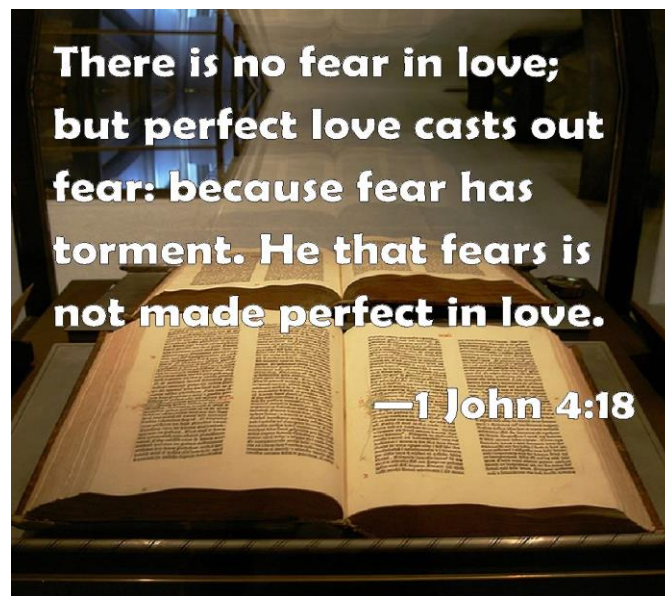
## **Sorrow Will Turn into Joy**

<sup>20</sup>Very truly, I tell you, you will weep and mourn, but the world will rejoice; you will have pain, but your pain will turn into joy.

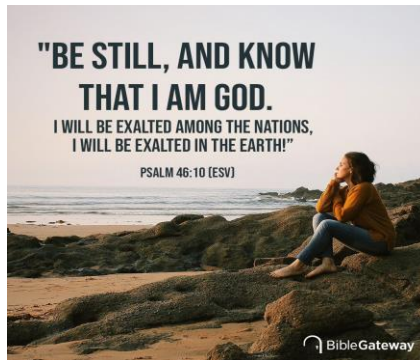
<sup>21</sup>When a woman is in labour, she has pain, because her hour has come. But when her child is born, she no longer remembers the anguish because of the joy of having brought a human being into the world. <sup>22</sup>So you have pain now; but I will see you again, and your hearts will rejoice, and no one will take your joy from you.

John 16:20-22

I believe this deep peace and ecstatic joy is possible because of God's agape love that can flow through us in any given moment. All we have to do is ask. Ask God to replace fear with LOVE! Ask for God's agape love to flow through you because:



What can we do when we suffer from *spiritual amnesia* and forget who we are and whose we are? Well, there are a number of things we can do. One is to find a way to meditate. There are so many ways to become centered and grounded. Some of us use centering prayer where we simply sit in silence, breathe and be still. Others are still somewhere in nature where Jesus went to pray over and over again. Remember these words from Psalm 46:10:



Or maybe taking a walk in nature will clear the mind and you can breathe in the beauty of nature. After all this is God's natural sanctuary, is it not? I don't know of anyone personally who does not benefit from spending time in nature. Not one.

Another method of remembering our Oneness with God and whose we are is using a breath prayer. How many of you have discovered your breath prayer? Remember a breath prayer is a very short prayer that you can say in one single breath such as breathing in peace and exhaling joy. Do that with me, breathe in peace and exhale joy. The reason that this is so helpful is that we are breathing "*ruach*", the very breath of God. For those of you who may not remember, *ruach* is a Hebrew word that is translated into English as wind, breath and spirit.

When my daughter Heather was about four or five years of age she asked a really important question. We were sitting outside on the steps of the apartment just a block or two from the seminary I was attending at the time and she surprised me with this question: "What is God like." Hmm ... being in seminary, I should be able to answer this question, right? I got to thinking about this as I felt a COOL breeze come through and sweep across our faces. It occurred to me to say this: "Heather, God is like the wind." And I paused and before I could say anything more she said, "Oh, you can feel God, but you can't see God."

I just marveled at what she said and then said to her, "Yes, honey, God is like the wind. You can feel God, but can't see God."

Sometimes we can't always feel the love or the Oneness of God for that matter, so we make a decision when faced with fear. Do we choose to love or do we choose to stay in our fear? Some of you have heard me say before a quote from Marriage Encounter: ***"Love is a Decision!"***

Now more than ever, as followers of Yeshua, we may not always feel the love, but when we choose to love, even when we don't feel it, something mystical happens and the love of God flows through us. I close with this verse as our closing prayer:

