

from
COVID
to
COURAGE

day five

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Day 5 -RSVP!

Meditation.

Every year it is the same.

PAC is going to host an event. Let's say it is the Father/Daughter Banquet or, this year, the Family Dance. We put out the communication months ahead of time. We cast vision. Oh, how we cast vision. We try to make it sound like it is going to be the single most important event of your lifetime. It is going to involve personal healing, weight loss, rejuvenate your marriage, bring financial freedom, and win your entire neighbourhood to Jesus.

As the weeks get closer to the event we bring out the big guns. Chris comes out to weep. Tamara comes out to leave us all no choice. I come out to explain that buying tickets is what Christians do who are actually serious about following Christ. Jake tells us about how his kids used to have a sinus infection and it was cured when he bought a ticket to the family dance. Kevin has never been to a family dance but still can't imagine anything better. Lydia explains how it will enhance cognitive development in preschoolers. And on and on..

Then, despite our best efforts to sell it we find ourselves only one week out from the event with a grand total of 24 tickets sold. We count staff noses and multiply by our offspring and realize no one who doesn't have to come has bought a ticket yet. We stress. We worry. We pray about cancelling. We decide to press on.

Then on deadline Sunday we sell 300 tickets and we are off to the races. Just another event where the good people of PAC waited until the last second and took approximately 3 days off the tail end of my life due to stress. I'm joking (kind of).

What does this have to do with fear?

Quite a bit. Because to defeat fear you need to respond to an invitation early.

Yesterday we were encouraged by Jeremiah to keep life as normal as we can by staying oriented to the future as best we can. His advice was pragmatic. It reminded me a bit of the Post-911 call to keep the economy strong by spending money.

We were all told to get out there and buy something. While this practical advice is helpful, it is incomplete. Jeremiah knew this. On top of telling the exiles to plant gardens and have babies, he also told them to earnestly pray and seek God. The battle against fear is fought on both vertical and horizontal planes.

It is both physical and spiritual.

In our verses today, Jeremiah's encouragement to seek God is echoed in Jesus's invitation to "come to me". Jesus gives the invitation in two very different contexts. One, is to people who are heavy and beaten down. The other, to those who, are experiencing the climax of what it means to be human at the pinnacle of the festival. We see the invitation to "come to me" is extended to us on both our worst days and our best days. We are to come to him in the peaks and valleys and, we assume by extension, every day in between.

The call to "come to me" rings especially clear in a season where the informal refrain is something more like "get away from me." When isolation is mandatory for some and "social distancing" is encouraged for all, the words "come to me" will be jarring. Hopefully jarring enough to be heard for the first time for some. And for others, maybe we will get to hear them again for what they are - a real invitation from a real person who both intends to and can lift our burdens.

Perhaps because of extra complications like childcare you will find yourself with less time on your hands. But I suspect if you are like most, the Covid-19 virus will mean you have more time. But that doesn't automatically mean you will have more time for the right things. Don't let these weeks (or months) go by.

Respond to Jesus' invitation early!

When life was busy, maybe you managed to spend 20 minutes a day with Jesus - aim for an hour.

Maybe you read a two-minute daily devotional sent to your inbox - now you can read the Book of Acts.

Maybe you glanced at your kids Sunday School lesson - turn that into a half hour activity together.

Maybe you know exactly two bible verses by heart - when this is all done you could probably have memorized James 1.

Whatever you do, make sure you leverage these days and weeks as an opportunity to learn more about Jesus. Take the opportunity to learn to pray in more depth. Enter the new stillness with ears tuned to hear His voice. Invest your newfound time in deepening your relationship with Jesus. Move it from theory to relationship.

Because the closer Jesus is to you the less room you have for fear.

And, when this is all behind us, you will find yourself better equipped for the rest of your life because you took Jesus up on his invitation.

Don't wait. "Come to Him."

Further Reading:

John 7:25-39 & Matthew 11:25-28

Key Verse:

"Come to me all who are weary and burdened and I will give you rest."
(Matthew 11:28)

"On the last and greatest day of the festival, Jesus stood and said in a loud voice, "Let anyone who is thirsty come to me and drink" (John 7:37)

Calibration Prayer:

Jesus, I respond to your invitation to "Come to Me" with a quick RSVP. I will. You will be seeing more of me in the next little while and I can hardly wait to get to know you in ways that are real, felt, and sustaining. I am excited not only about battling fear with you, but at the prospect of the rest of my life walking closer and closer with you.