



A sermon by Pastor Josh Moody

“How Faith Can Free Us from Fear”

Acts 3:1-4:4

The church building is closed, but the church is not. The ministry of the gospel carries on, and wherever you are, I believe that this is a God-ordained moment and a God-ordained passage, and I trust a God-ordained message for you right now in this situation.

There are many people who are living in uncertainty. This is a time of fear, of insecurity. We are even witnessing people panic buying of various products at grocery stores and the rest. And there is a sense of the unknown because this is unfamiliar territory for many of us. The whole world, the governments are struggling to find an answer to the situations that we are facing. They are scrambling to look for the best medical approach, and there are even disagreements about that. If you've been watching the news, there's one approach taking place in one country. One leader is responding in one way, and another leader is responding in another way. And all that adds to the sense of confusion and uncertainty that many of us feel.

But here we are around our God's Word, and there's a message from God to us. And this story, I believe, shows us how faith—faith in the name of Jesus, not the name of Jesus as some sort of magical implement that we can just say and that will solve the problem, but faith in the message of Jesus, the person of Jesus, what Jesus did on the cross—that faith, that real committed faith, how faith can free us from fear. And that's the message this morning: **How faith can free us from fear.**

And the story that we've just had read out for us so well has three characters in it, and I'm just going to very simply walk us through those three characters, and that will be the structure of the sermon and will help us to hear what it is that God is saying. Those three characters are **the Healer, the hurting,** and then **the opportunity** that is before each of us this morning.

So, how faith can free us from fear, and we are going to look at the Healer, the hurting—because there are many people who are hurting. You read the stories about Northern Italy or places in France, and now right around us so far, there's not a great deal of that yet, but even if you are not physically hurting, there is uncertainty, insecurity, fear, that kind of psychological, spiritual hurt. So, the

Healer, the hurting, and then the opportunity, the great opportunity that is before each and every one of us, before every church in the country and around the world.

I've been saying to our staff—you know, our staff have been gathering together, working very hard. By the way, the staff are working very hard to serve us in every possible way—and I've been saying to our staff team, "Never waste a good crisis." Here's an opportunity, everyone's ears are open. They are looking for an answer, and we have the answer in Jesus Christ. What a great day to be alive! What an extraordinary opportunity that you have! So how faith can free us from fear: the Healer, the hurting—and we have love and compassion and help for the hurting—and then the opportunity that is before each and every one of us.

Well, first then, the **Healer**. Of course, it's Peter and John who in one sense are the instruments of that healing, but you notice I didn't say the healers. I said the Healer, because they are very quick to make sure that the glory, the focal point, the message is not Peter and John and their ability to heal. No, it is Jesus. It's not by their own power, they say, but it's through faith in the name of Jesus that this healing comes, this salvation comes, this how faith can free us from fear. It's the Healer that is Jesus. But how can you and I—those of us who do believe in Jesus this morning who are gathered at homes and in coffee shops and around the country and indeed around the world—how can we be a channel for that healing? And we can learn from the way that Peter and John were a channel for that work of the Healer, Jesus, in their situation as they were addressing the hurting.

First of all, you notice that they notice, they *observe*—there's the crippled man, the man who is hurting, the person who is suffering from some congenital disease, the people in our world who are confused and uncertain and in difficulty and they are facing all kinds of difficulties and struggles and fears. But Peter and John, they notice, they observe. They don't just keep on walking by. They don't just look after their own needs. They don't just stock up with all the grocery stuff that they need. They are not just concerned with their own household, with their own situation, with their own health, with their own fears, with their own lives. No, they observe. They see. They have compassion. They notice.

Now you see, my friends, if we are going to have an impact today, it is very important that we observe, we notice, we see, we actually look at what's going on in the world, and what's going on in the world is this is surfacing all kinds of tensions and insecurities and uncertainties, and there are people in pain and difficulty. And they observe. Now will you observe? When you read the news, will you not just respond about your own personal life, but will you observe what is going on? Will you look with love and compassion on the world around you, on the neighbors around you, on those who do not have hope for

eternal life, who are living in fear of death at every moment, but this is just surfacing that fear. Will you observe?

But Peter and John do more than merely observe. They also *raise*. They raise the man, and our message is a message of hope and joy. It is not a putting people down kind of message. It's a message of hope, and we are to raise people up, to give them a sense that there is meaning and purpose. There are people that are watching us right now. They are watching how you live at home. They are watching how you deal with your children. They are watching how you deal with your schooling. They are watching how you respond to this issue, and they are listening, and we have an opportunity to raise people up.

You know, we can say, "Look, there is hope. There is meaning. All those questions that you've had at the back of your mind that you have been keeping locked in as you go through the busyness of life. Now you have a moment when you are not doing so much, when many events have been canceled, and let me tell you, there is hope. There is meaning. There is a message of joy." They observe what is going on, but then they raise people up to the joy and meaning that can come only through faith in Jesus. How faith can free us from fear. They raise people up. "Look, I've got a message for you. I've got joy for you. I've got hope for you." And they raise people up, and we who follow Jesus need not only to observe what's going on around, but also then to raise people up. And Peter and John did that so that they were a channel of healing, so that we can be a channel of healing to our world today.

But not only do they observe, not only do they raise, they also *explain*. And Peter preaches this extraordinary message about the gospel, and he explains it very carefully, what's going on and what the story is right back to Abraham and Isaac and how God has sent Jesus as the fulfillment of all these promises and he died for the sins of the world. He took the punishment that we deserved, and God raised him up to show that he had won the victory, and Jesus now has sent his Spirit so that times of refreshing can come upon us. Lord, may this be such a time. May this be a time when a new season of refreshing falls upon our city, falls upon you—times of refreshing may come. And he explains the message.

You know, one very simple way of understanding the message of the gospel is summarized in four straightforward words: First of all, **God**. God made us to be in a relationship of loving obedience. But we—**us**—God, us, second word, us. We have all rebelled against God, and God in his justice declares that the penalty for such rebellion is death. First word, God. Second word, us. Third word, **Jesus**. God sent Jesus to take the penalty that we deserve so that we might raise to new life, to fresh hope. How faith can free us from fear. God, us, Jesus, and then **response**. And the response is faith, faith in Jesus, not simply a notional faith, not simply a nominal faith, not simply an intellectualized faith, not simply "I

grew up in a Christian home,” not simply “I go to church,” not simply “I have a Christian background,” not simply “I believe that God exists,” but a committed faith, a commitment to Jesus. And then we are a channel of healing to the world around us.

How faith can free us from fear. We ourselves can have that message to those around us. We can be a channel for the healing power of Jesus in this time of great crisis really for the whole globe. So, how faith can free us from fear.

And first we’ve looked at the Healer, and now we are going to look at the **hurting**. There’s the crippled man. He’s been sitting by this gate, the gate that is called Beautiful. No one knows exactly which gate that was, but it was one of the gates there at the temple at the time, and many people have passed on by. They’ve perhaps thrown out a dollar bill or a few cents every now and then, and they’ve given him a little bit of money, but they’ve kept on walking by and there he is in great trauma and difficulty. No one can help him. He’s lying on a bed somewhere coughing and hard to breathe and no one can help him. There’s no medical answer. “Silver and gold have we none, but what we do have, that we can give you.” We can give you hope in eternity that will then shed light on this present moment that will free you from fear, for at the back of all our fears is the fear of death. And what this moment in our society is exposing is how all the ideology which our society has bought into—the ideology of atheism, the ideology of secularism—is utterly, morally bankrupt. It gives you no hope after the grave, and therefore, it exposes your fears right now.

“Silver and gold have we none.” I’m not a medical professional, but I do have a gospel for you. I have a hope for you. I have hope for the hurting. You say, I want that hope. I want to be free from fear. How do I get it? Well, notice what the sick man did, what the crippled man did.

See, he’d been *asking* for hope. He’d been asking all sorts of people, day after day, month after month, year after year. He’d been asking for help in all sorts of different areas as they passed him by, and he was asking again, but Peter and John made him do more than merely ask. They said, “*Look*, look at us, look at us, look at us. We have something that is beyond merely silver and gold. We have a message for all eternity. The greatest message on the face of the planet, the greatest message in the universe. Look at us.”

See, it’s beyond merely asking. It’s faith. It’s committed faith. It’s saying, “Yeah, I’m going to trust in Jesus with all my life.” If you do that, you will be released from fear this morning. That’s my prayer. How faith can free us from fear. He did more than merely ask. He looked.

And then do you notice once that happened, once he had been raised up through the message of the gospel, how he praised, leaping and jumping and praising God. I don’t know whether you want to

do that when you are at your home on your own or with your children—leaping and jumping and praising God—but he *praised*. Praise is a great way to release you from fear.

I remember one family I went to visit once. Their son had recently had a terrible calamitous accident. He'd been cycling in the Himalayan mountains, I think it was, and his bicycle had hit an unstable pebble rock on the small path as he was cycling in the Himalayan mountains, and he had tumbled off his bicycle and had fallen hundreds and hundreds of feet down to the valley beneath, and they had heard the news that he'd been air lifted to hospital, and I, as their pastor, went round to visit them in their home, and they didn't know what had happened. They didn't know whether he was alive or dead. They didn't know whether he was paralyzed or it was a relatively minor accident, but he'd been airlifted to hospital, so they knew it was pretty bad. And there I was. I went to their home. I knocked on the door. I walked into the room where the family had gathered while they were waiting for regular updates about this hurting man, this hurting situation, this hurting world, this fear in which we, many of us, live. And they're waiting for it. And I expected to go into a room of mourning and sadness and depression and difficulty and tears. And instead, when I walked in, they were singing praise to God. They were lifting themselves through praise to God. And you know that young man was paralyzed. He's a paraplegic, paralyzed from the neck down. I went to visit him in hospital. Many people had gone to pray for him, some were even telling him he was definitely going to be healed. I went to him and said, "Look, I don't know whether you are going to be healed or not. I know that God can heal, but I don't know whether he will, but I will tell you this. Whether he heals you or not, God can use this moment for his great glory and for your good. I want you to trust in his sovereign purpose so that you will be freed by faith from fear."

And that man did exactly that, and now he is paralyzed, but he has a ministry, a global ministry, ministering to many other people in such a situation as his, and God is using him. And God may, through faith, intervene in your life and cause a miraculous healing. I know God can do that, but he doesn't always do that, but I do know that if you trust in him this morning, and if you lift yourself through praise this morning, you can be freed from fear, that God can use this very time as you send text messages to friends, as you reach out to people through email, as you FaceTime with family, as you encourage others next week when we do livestreaming again to gather around a computer, a TV screen, and listen in as we have all these microcenters of the gospel expanding through the work as times of refreshing come from the Lord at this moment. I know he can use you if you trust him. Faith can free you from fear.

He praised. He didn't just ask. He looked: "Look at us." He praised. And then you notice how he *clung* to Peter and John, how he stuck with them. Look, College Church, this is a word for you who are

members here, you who are regular attendees here, this is a very important moment for us to stick together. Yes, we need to love our neighbors by appropriate social distancing, as is the phrase right now, good hygiene, and all those kinds of things that have informed the decisions that we've made as a church about our gathering this morning. Yes, we need to do that. But emotionally, spiritually, through communications, electronic means that technologically we can do these days, we need to stick together. And when the day comes when we will gather together as one body again, how great will be the rejoicing of that day! Absence makes the heart grow fonder, and there will come a moment because we stuck together spiritually, when we gather together again, how great will be that day!

So, we have the Healer, Jesus. We have the hurting who find healing through Jesus, how faith can free us from fear, and then now we have the **opportunity**. There is an opportunity for you this morning. There's an opportunity for us as a church this morning. Never waste a good crisis. God is exposing perhaps idols of our hearts. God is exposing situations and issues that we are scared about because we are scared of other things. Our relationship with God is not where it should be. There's an opportunity for you to get serious about God. God has brought this moment into the world right now to declare that now is the time to repent from our sins and turn to God, that times of refreshing may come upon us. Look, we are all aware that our society is in great need of a moral and spiritual revival, and God in his sovereignty is bringing, I believe, this moment to call out to us and say turn back to me. Would you do that? What a great opportunity.

And as Peter and John preached, 5,000 were added to their number that day. Many people believed, but not everyone. The Sadducees, the temple gods, some of the religious elite—they were annoyed, they were angry, they turned their backs, they missed the opportunity. I don't believe that is going to be your case. I believe that you will seize this opportunity to put your trust in Jesus and so to have times of refreshing that will come from the Lord so that you can live in a way that is free from fear because of your faith in Jesus.

You say, what does that mean most practically? Well, here are some practical ways that it can make a difference to you. First of all, let's avoid the crazy and *embrace God-centered wisdom*. There are all sorts of crazy ideas out there and on the Internet, people having all sorts of unusual and extreme responses to this moment. Let's avoid the crazy. Let's embrace God-centered wisdom, God-centered wisdom which is wisdom that is from above, that is first of all pure and then peaceable and then open to reason. We need to use sanctified common sense at days like this, to have appropriate hygiene and social distancing and all the practical ways, this God-centered prudent wisdom. Let's avoid the crazy and embrace the God-centered wisdom.

But then also, it means something *personal*. You personally, you individually, you in your own relationship with God, you have an opportunity now to get serious, to turn your back upon materialism and comfort. Your schedule is cleared this week. What are you going to do? Are you going to stream Netflix? Look, we have so many opportunities today. You could re-stream this service. It'll be up in a day, I believe, on the Internet. God Centered Life, the ministry that is of preaching that goes out across the country and across the world is available for you on Moody Radio, 10:30 p.m. every Monday to Friday, 7:30 Sunday night. You can get it through an app, a podcast. You can listen to it. Get into the Bible. Get into prayer. Ask the Lord, "Lord, would you renew me? Would you revive me? Would you make this an opportunity for me, that I personally might experience times of refreshing from the Lord?" Don't waste this opportunity as your schedule is cleared and waste it by just watching mind numbing, R-rated Netflix movies. No, commit yourself to Christ and seek him. There's a personal opportunity for you.

But then there's an opportunity for your *family*. Perhaps you do do family devotionals. Perhaps you do gather your children around God's Word and pray together and whatever function and technique works best for you in that regard, but perhaps you don't. Perhaps you have never gathered your children around the Bible. Perhaps you have never prayed with your children. Perhaps you have never had a real family worship in your own home. Here's an opportunity. School is canceled. You have the time. Use it. Make the most of it.

We send out a daily devotional every day. Use that. Make the most of this opportunity for your personal life, for your family life, but then also, for your witness and for the world. People are open right now. The email we sent out earlier this week had the highest number of open rates of any email we have ever sent out. People are listening. They are looking for hope. They are looking for meaning, and we have that message. We have that hope. We have that meaning. There's an opportunity. How faith can free us from fear.

The **Healer**, Jesus himself, and how we can be a channel for that healing as we observe the world around us and take notice of it and have compassion upon it and then raise people up through the hope of the gospel as we explain the gospel—God, us, Jesus, response.

The **hurting**. We live in a world of great pain and difficulty at any time, and especially right now, confusion and fear, and you, yourself, may be in that place wondering what is going on. Don't just ask for help. Look at us. Look at us. Receive from Jesus through committed faith. Receive from him and then praise him and then stick together as a community, so that when we gather together next week live streaming, other people have heard about it, they will be listening too, and then when we gather together finally, whenever that is, as a body, there will be such joy as we bring yet more people with us.

And then, the **opportunity**. The opportunity for God-centered wisdom. Let's avoid the crazy. Let's embrace God-centered wisdom, and then let's make the most of this opportunity for your personal life. Don't waste this by just streaming Netflix. Let's seek times of refreshing from the Lord for your personal life and for your family life—devotions, studying the Bible, praying. And then for your witness to the world—sending out links to good teaching, sending out connections where they can hear about the gospel, hear answers, sending out connections to this sermon so that people can hear it, hear the message we have, witness to the world that we are a people who have hope and meaning beyond the grave. And so, though this is of course a difficult time, though of course there is confusion in the air, though of course we are natural human beings—we are going to feel moments where we are not quite sure what is going on—nonetheless, we who believe in Jesus, we have a faith that frees us from fear, and it is in Jesus' name that we declare the gospel this morning.

O our Lord God, we do pray that that faith in Jesus would free us from fear. I pray, Lord, for those who are struggling with uncertainty and insecurity, that the confidence that comes from the sovereignty of God, who will never leave us nor forsake us, would give great security to all this morning. And I pray, Lord, for those who don't yet know you who are listening, who perhaps just have a churchy faith, a nominal faith, that this morning by your Spirit, you would cause them not simply to ask but to look, to look at you, to stare at you, to commit to you. I pray that you would do that by your Spirit this morning, that a time of refreshing would come on this city, on this country, on this world. Our Lord God, use this time as a way of exponentially increasing the power of your gospel, for we pray it for the glory of Jesus and in his name, Amen.