

It has ~~crippled~~ handicapped, ~~crippled~~ more people than polio ever did. It has crippled more men ~~and women and children~~ than all the wars that have been fought by this country or any other country. More men and women and children are disabled by this scourge, than by all the automobile accidents that have occurred since cars were first invented. It is the crippler that we describe by the four letter word, fear.

In Columbia fear is the most effective tool of the drug lords. They murder a few, torture a few, and count on fear to paralyze the rest of their opposition. In El Salvador, Six priests were slaughtered so that fear would silence six hundred or six thousand more. In eastern Europe, for these many years walls and tanks and guns have all been used to instill one thing in the hearts of the peoples, fear.

~~And because of fear~~

Maybe you, like me, know
 Crippled by fear. Do you know what it is like to pass by people in distress to want to help them, but to drive right on down the road, confessing, I was afraid to stop? *Maybe you like me* Do you know what it is like to want to give to help the hungry, but to see the ~~uncertainly~~ dark clouds gathering ^{on your own horizon,} ~~in your own life~~ and to say, I did nothing for I was afraid? *Maybe you like me* Do you know what it is like to have a friend in grief, and to want to write a note, or speak some words, but to do nothing because you were afraid of saying the wrong thing? ~~Fear~~

~~It is the crippler that we describe by the four letter word, fear.~~

No death squad has ever hunted me, no criminal ever threatened me, Fear. *Maybe you like me* Afraid of being embarrassed, afraid of doing wrong, afraid of failing. Afraid of being hurt,

Jesus told a parable, of a nobleman who went away to receive his kingdom. Clearly it is our Lord himself spoken of here, ascended to heaven, one day to return as king of all. Calling ten of his servants, he gave to each ^{one} ~~ten~~ pounds, ~~ten~~ three months wages or there about. Trade with these till I come, he told them. When he returned, one of his servants had increased the amount

ten times, another five times, and another had this to say, Lord, here is your pound, which I kept laid away in a napkin; for I was afraid of you because you are a severe man, you take up what you did not lay down and reap what you did not sow. And the King said to him, I will condemn you out of your own mouth, you wicked servant! You knew that I was a severe man taking up what I did not lay down and reaping what I did now Sow? Why then did you not put my money into the bank, and at my coming I should have collected it with interest?

Condemned, a wicked servant, because he let his fear rule him. The confession I was afraid, did not bring compassion, but was met with judgement.

I wonder at ~~that~~ that. How unlike so much of what Jesus did is this parable. The weak, the helpless ~~and~~ the downtrodden, Jesus was so gentle ~~to~~ with them, saving his harshness for the self-righteous, and the proud, and the holier than thous. But in this parable, the one who was bold and increased what he had been entrusted ten times, he was told, "Well, done good servant. And the one less ~~bold~~, but still bold enough to increase the pound five times, he was rewarded also. But the fearful one, he was stripped of even what little he had, and condemned.

I was afraid, brought forth the words, YOU wicked servant.
^{Could it be}
~~Maybe it is~~ because fear is the only enemy that can defeat God's work in you?

When you were baptized you were joined to Jesus. In him you were granted forgiveness of all your sins, in him you were granted victory ^{over} of death, victory over the devil. Through Jesus God has prepared for you all sorts of loving, of good deeds in which he wants you to walk.

But what if you are afraid, what if you are afraid to believe that your sins are truly forgiven? Then you may live as if they are not, like a ^{lame} man who had been given the ability to walk, but refuses to take the first step. What if God has prepared a good deed for you, an opportunity to be his hand lifting someone in need and you are afraid? If fear rules your heart, has its way then the deed will not be done, as if it was never prepared for you to do.

Once Jesus walked upon the water. And his disciple Peter wanted to be like ^{him} Jesus, so he ventured out of the boat, watching Jesus he took one step, then another. But then he saw the wind and the waves, and fear left him sinking.

When we keep our eyes on Jesus, then even something as unlikely as walking on water may happen. But where there is fear, there is only sinking.

Did you notice though, what Jesus wanted from the fearful servant? Not a tenfold increase, or a fivefold increase, just that he would have put the money in the bank to draw a little interest. When we are afraid, we often must begin like that. A little trusting, risking friendliness to a stranger, joining a study group where I will learn more about God and myself, sending that card to my friend who has lost a loved one, asking for help with those problems that trouble. One step, one try at trusting. Fear may still cast a large shadow, but in little ways faith begins to grow.

Fear not the angel said as he announced Christ's birth, fear not the young man in the tomb told the women, even to this day this is God's word to you, do not be afraid, In Jesus I have provided all good things for you in life and in death. Fear not.

In to endure the cross the crown will give you and I will be with you every valley until you stand with me in my kingdom. Fear not