

Do Not Fear
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Is. 41:10 do not fear, for I am with you,
do not be afraid, for I am your God;
I will strengthen you, I will help you,
I will uphold you with my victorious right hand's good to be back.

SLIDE: STAND IN THE GAP – STAGE SHOT

Two Saturdays ago I was in Washington DC to speak to thousands of men gathered at the Washington Monument
SLIDE OF CROWD AT WASH MONUMENT.

for a day of worship and inspiration.

SLIDE: TWO OF DAN SPEAKING

It could be a heady event for a speaker before a reportedly 20-thousand men. You speak there thinking of Martin Luther King Jr....

SLIDE: CROWD SHOT

Lincoln Memorial on one side, with the White House, Congress and the Lincoln Memorial filling out the diamond around the mall surrounding the Washington Monument.

SLIDE OF CROWD

But the Lord never let it go to my head. He humbles me daily.
I was on the speakers platform and

my friend Bruce Fong had just spoken. Bruce is taller than I, a little heavier than I and wears glasses.

When he finished speaking I walked off the speaker's platform before him to go to the speakers' tent.

As I was walking down the plank to the tent, I passed a man who said to me "Thank you for that talk."

But Bruce is taller than I, heavier than I, and he wears glasses.

As I got to the speakers' tent I had just sat there for maybe 60 seconds when a man came up to me and said,

"Are you Huron...Huron Claus...the featured American Indian speaker, president of the Christian Hope Eskimo Indian Association."

No, I'm Dan Chun. And the man said, "Oh, and walked off to the find the famous speaker....Huron Claus who is taller than I, and who is heavier than I and wears glasses – and who is American....Indian....a chief of his tribe.

SLIDE OF OUT SIDE OF GLENARDEN

The next day I went to First Baptist Church of Glenarden in Maryland and gave greetings on behalf of our church to the large 7500-member African American Church.

SLIDE OF INSIDE THE CHURCH – PEOPLE

No chance, they would mix me up with someone else there.

In fact, when I spoke to them,

SLIDE OF DAN SPEAKING

I told them, I was honored to be at their new 4000 seat sanctuary that just opened September 15. Gave them greetings from our church.

I told them it was a historic moment to be with them, because I bet I was the first Asian Presbyterian to ever walk through their doors.

Besides me and Ken and Mary Vinson and one white lady in a wheelchair, the other 7,500 people that day were all African American.

SLIDE: BAY AREA 2007 SLIDE

Then I went to San Francisco to do Bay Area 2007 – our largest Hawaiian islands Ministries gathering in that area in our history with more than 1300 attending from 60 churches. Jordan Seng was with me.

SLIDE: LOSE PREVIOUS SLIDE GO TO DARK

So I was flying home last Sunday, hoping to really relax on the plane after a long time away – which I hate being that long away from you. I normally only take one outside speaking address a year on the mainland, and the Washington DC one was it.

So I was tired. Hoping I would not have any crazy plane stories....to share with you all...as I often do....but then it happened.

The plane had not taken off. Had a lot of time. I was on board. I decided to go to the bathroom before we took off.

Door was locked and then a young man, taller than I, heavier than I, without glasses...bald...built like a linebacker stood next to me waiting his turn.

I was staring at the bathroom door when suddenly I felt this pain in my left breast. The young man pinched me, right where my USC Trojan logo was on my long-sleeved white T-shirt, and he said to me, "you lost."

Not only did this stranger pinch me but he insulted my alma Mater's football team, and I said, "no they didn't, they won yesterday. You're thinking of last week when Stanford beat them. "

And then he hit me in the arm and said, "No they lost", and then he hit me again and then

grabbed my left bicep and started to squeeze it and said, "What's wrong with your quarterback? He played so poorly."

I said, "He played with a broken finger."

And he said, "Oh, poor boy, broken finger, what's wrong with him? Is he a wrestler? And I am a Colt Brennan fan."

It was then I noticed the alcohol on his breath. So now, no more arguing from me.

"Hey, I'm from Hawaii, and No, the USC quarterback is not a wrestler."

Then he pointed at me and said, "I saw you on TV last night; you're a wrestler. You were wrestling."

"I'm not a wrestler. And No, I wasn't on TV last night."

"Yes, you were." And then he grabbed me around my head and neck and held me for a quick one second.

It's funny how fast you can think in those situations with the adrenalin surging, and I was thinking, "I think this is a half nelson hold he has on me. No, it's a headlock."

He let me go.

A woman came out of the bathroom.

I offered to let him go in the bathroom first, but he opened the door for me and said, "No, you go in first and if you don't I am going to slap you," and made the motion like he was going to hit me several times on my butt.

So I went in and then let him in.

When he went in to the bathroom, I told two flight attendants that you have a very drunk person on this plane in the rest room and he hit me twice and touched me.

They did nothing.

I told another flight attendant who then called the purser who checked him out, and decided to not take him off the plane.

So we took off. I was seated in the very last row of the plane – I decided a great vantage point to see everything.

I noticed he was sitting five seats to the right of a Halau, I took with me to the Bay Area seated 6 rows in front of me.

It was then I decided to be the self-imposed Guardian Angel for my section and watch this guy.

I noticed a short woman sitting next to him, and I was trying to determine if he was hassling her. A young child maybe 5 years old sat in front of him and a toddler back left.

Then I saw him throw a blanket at the short woman's husband seated beside her. I was worried.

Later, I got up and asked the flight attendant if there was an air marshal on the flight. She said no.

Bummer, it was then I thought, "I wonder how fast I can sign up for the NRA?"

One word came to mind – VIGILANTE. I would take the law into my own hands. I have my wife on board, I have two of my HIM board members, I have my conference Halau, and my staff aide John Kim who sang today. This was super hero time.

I immediately deputized my self - Dan Chun – Rookie U.S. Air Marshall. – Move over Chuck Norris, Texas Ranger.

My main weapon is prayer, so there I was in the back of the plane, and I prayed up a storm upon that drunken man seated 6 rows in front of me, and it was this prayer....Lord, make this man....sleepy. Make him drowsy. Make his eyelids feel like two tons. May he start counting a million sheep and fall asleep.

And lo and behold, he fell asleep....from the sheep sent by God, the Great Shepherd!

The question is, when we are in trouble - who we going to call? There ain't no ghostbusters. And there might not be an air marshall on board, and when we are in trouble we feel like a nobodies. Nobody knows your name....

Who you gonna call?

Seriously, this world is a scary place. There are crazy people out there....much more dangerous than my airplane friend but also serious diseases that hurt and kill, challenges, temptations, troubles, and mean people

Scary. What does God in the midst of this?

Jesus Himself says, in this world you will have tribulations.

What does God say?

Let's look at our Bible passage today.

SLIDE:

Is. 41:10 do not fear, for I am with you,
 do not be afraid, for I am your God:
I will strengthen you, I will help you,
I will uphold you with my victorious right hand.

This verse from the Old Testament book Isaiah tells it all. Let's break it down section by section.

SLIDE: (can we always have the entire verse up on the screen but then just highlight certain phrases by different colors or something)? HIGHLIGHT "DO NOT FEAR"

It begins with the words, DO NOT FEAR.

The writer of this verse is a man named Isaiah. A prophet of Israel who was given the task to encourage the people of Israel that there is a God who cares for them even when there is suffering.

As a prophet, Isaiah hears God's voice in his heart and mind and writes down what God is saying.

God said,

to the people of Israel and also to every person, even us thousands of years later

—

Do not fear.

I bet all of us in this room fear something. God knows that fear is often our first instinct when we face a challenge.

For the younger crowd it might mean fearing whether or not you will do well on a test or make a team or get to the college you want.

For some it might mean – will I ever get a boyfriend or girlfriend or get married?

For others it can mean money problems, a terminal illness, a marriage falling apart or have fallen asunder.

We can live in a world of fear...and feel dusted, busted, broken down, apprehensive.

And God says, do not fear. Why?

Because He says, I, the Lord of Lords, the Almighty God, the maker of the Universe...yes I AM WITH you.

SLIDE: HIGHLIGHT I am with you.

How is God with us? What is he really like? He is divine, powerful, beyond our understanding. But if He did talk to us as humans, to me, ...would I understand it? What would He be like if He were with me?

The answer is that God did decide to come down to earth to be with us. Christians believe that God came down to earth and took human form...He became fully human while still fully God.

That's what Christmas is all about 2000 years ago, God came to earth in the form of a man named Jesus.

The amazing thing is that God wanted to show that He is not a distant God, but a God who decided from the day He made humankind that He wanted to have a relationship with us.

And through Jesus Christ, a living breathing man who was fully God, He told us about Himself and how we are to love one another.

God said, I am giving you a clear demonstration of what I am like, how I act, how I want people to act....I am doing it through Jesus.

The prophet Isaiah, about 27-hundred years ago foretold that the Messiah, meaning Jesus Christ, would come to earth.

And here is who he described the Messiah in his 53rd chapter. He speaks in the past tense of what we would say about Him after He was gone.

SLIDES:

Is. 53:1 ¶ Who has believed our message? To whom will the LORD reveal his saving power?

Is. 53:2 My servant grew up in the LORD's presence like a tender green shoot, sprouting from a root in dry and sterile ground. There was nothing beautiful or majestic about his appearance, nothing to attract us to him.

Notice, it is an indication that when God came to this earth He chose not to look like Brad Pitt but a normal person like you and me.

Is. 53:3 He was despised and rejected—a man of sorrows, acquainted with bitterest grief. We turned our backs on him and looked the other way when he went by. He was despised, and we did not care.

Is. 53:4 ¶ Yet it was our weaknesses he carried; it was our sorrows that weighed him down. And we thought his troubles were a punishment from God for his own sins!

Is. 53:5 But he was wounded and crushed for our sins. He was beaten that we might have peace. He was whipped, and we were healed!

Is. 53:6 All of us have strayed away like sheep. We have left God's paths to follow our own. Yet the LORD laid on him the guilt and sins of us all.

Is. 53:7 ¶ He was oppressed and treated harshly, yet he never said a word. He was led as a lamb to the slaughter. And as a sheep is silent before the shearers, he did not open his mouth.

Is. 53:8 From prison and trial they led him away to his death. But who among the people realized that he was dying for their sins—that he was suffering their punishment?

Is. 53:9 He had done no wrong, and he never deceived anyone. But he was buried like a criminal; he was put in a rich man's grave.

Is. 53:10 ¶ But it was the LORD's good plan to crush him and fill him with grief. Yet when his life is made an offering for sin, he will have a multitude of children, many heirs. He will enjoy a long life, and the LORD's plan will prosper in his hands.

And when we read Gospel stories we see that this was actually the life of Jesus in many of those things – how he was treated, how he was beaten, jailed, crucified and suffered for our sake to remove a terminal disease that all of us have that is called sin.

Sin is basically separation from God. It is the human nature part of us that says we should be God, the world revolves around us, it's all about us...and in fact, we are the Messiah....we don't need a God, and stand apart from Him. We control the world.

Sin is the disease that spreads the notion that we can control our own destiny.

This is what generations of humans continue to assert that we know how to take care of ourselves. Yet, the history of the world shows, we have not been good managers with things or people.

There are been disastrous wars, terrible human cruelty, genocide.
We have not take care of our environment or the people around is.
We gamble on people rather than trust God.

But still God says, I am a God to be here WITH YOU.

SLIDE: Do not be afraid

But then God adds this in addition to “do not fear, I am with you”...He says, DO NOT BE AFRAID.

But he already said, “do not fear”...why is He adding “do not be afraid”?

We have been let down, betrayed. Why trust God’s words? Why trust Jesus? Why trust the Bible? Our hurt can be severe...so why shouldn’t we be afraid?

God repeats adds do not be afraid to do not fear because He knows how great our fears are.

He knows how deeply we feel if and when we fear we are weak and vulnerable.

So he said, do not be afraid but God goes one step further....He says you don’t need to be afraid...because

SLIDE: I AM YOUR GOD.

He says, I am your God. I love the word YOUR. He is saying, though there are billions of people, I want a personal relationship with you.

I will hear YOUR prayers;
I will hear YOUR sobs and crying, not only am I with you...but I am YOUR God. Not that the world will revolve around you...no I am God not you....but I am YOUR God. I will listen to you.

I am a God who knows pain, because I actually came to earth as Jesus.

I submitted myself to pain and betrayal when I came on earth. In fact, there is no pain, no betrayal, temptation, nothing that I have not personally experienced.

Betrayal – I was betrayed says Jesus.

Misunderstood – I told people to love one another and they didn’t.

Tempted – yes I even felt like asking God to take away the cup of his will from my lips.

Got no credit for doing good – that’s me, I healed people and most of them never thanked me.

Suffer pain – I was crucified!

Lost loved ones – I lost Lazarus and cried my eyes out.

Get frustrated – yes, in fact, I even threw a table over to make a point!

Depressed – when I was on the cross....I felt forsaken.

And this God says, I am YOUR God. I just wish you would acknowledge it and have a relationship with me. Because I have plans for you...big plans...plans for good. I have a destiny for you...I have plans for your job, your relationships, marriage, friendships.

But you gotta trust me. And we have to take care of that fatal disease in your soul called sin that will always plague you for your life.

Get this, God won't love us more if we get rid of the sin....it's just that He wants to make sure it doesn't prevent us from a relationship with Him.

If we don't sin...He doesn't love us more.

But get this.

The good news is that when Jesus suffered and died, He took on our sins....and filled the space that separated us from God – that desire to be in control, that struggle to make life perfect that separated us can over both in this life and for eternity...

but we first have to acknowledge that God is saying I am your God...yes your God. And that you have to decide to trust me, follow me and allow me to be your Lord.

You don't need to put your mind on a shelf and to throw out your intellectual capacity....but you do have to trust me.

Because you need my help and power.

So that is why, when we need help, when people are against us, when our loved ones are dying, when we are facing a divorce or trying to beat an addiction or staring at a terminal illness, we need to hear God's voice say to us:

SLIDE: I will strengthen you, and I will help you.

Through God's supernatural power we have the strength to love the unlovable, forgive the unforgivable as well as ask forgiveness to keep on keeping on when life demands it.

As our church knows, we have all been to the school of hard knocks, including this pastor.

Been through a divorce. Most churches wouldn't want a divorced pastor. But this church said, we know all including our pastor have made mistakes and need the grace of God.

We have said this would be a hospital for sinners and not a museum of saints, perfect people....and that is certainly true of this pastor.

And yet in God's grace, I have had a wonderful wife in Pam and great kids and have had the privilege to lead our church...this band of brothers and sisters who are not perfect but in process and who all know this God who said to us, do not fear, for I am with you, do not be afraid for I am your God.

To get into this church we have to admit we are not perfect but in process.

We are not better than others....but certainly better than we were now that we have experienced the joy and love of God who has forgiven our sin – loved us and shown us how to love others better.

The last part of the verse is this:

SLIDE:

For I will raise you up with my victorious right hand.

Raise you up....means there will be times we will be knocked down. Nothing wrong with being knocked down....but courage and strength is to the one who gets ups.

And if being knocked down means the pride gets knocked out of us, and we get up with God in us...then we will be blessed.

For God says, I will raise you up...if knocked down I will raise you up with my right hand....which in the old Testament is the symbol for the strongest arm of God....but notice that the verse says VICTORIOUS

SLIDE: Victorious

Right hand.

It means when you are knocked down God will somehow always raise you up not as a loser but as a winner...you will be victorious somehow.

Does it mean you will always be healed...no, but when knocked down by disease you can still rise with courage and strength and hope.

Does it mean you will always be rich....no, but in your poverty he will give you a way to make ends meet.

Does it mean you won't be in relationships that are not hard or hurtful....no, but the Lord will give you wisdom and the way to navigate in what can be white water rapids of dealing with people.

Sometimes in our fear...in our being afraid....we run away from God...even though he offers the riches of a relationship with Him...even though He offers not condemnation but love and acceptance....even though He wants to be close to us in an intimate friendship.

Let me close with a story that Jesus, this God who came to earth told as a way to explain how much God loves us.

SLIDES OF THE VERSES:

Luke 15:11 ¶ Then Jesus said, "There was a man who had two sons.

Luke 15:12 The younger of them said to his father, 'Father, give me the share of the property that will belong to me.' So he divided his property between them.

[THIS WAS LIKE SAYING, I WANT MY INHERITANCE NOW BECAUSE I CAN'T WAIT FOR YOU TO DIE.]

Luke 15:13 A few days later the younger son gathered all he had and traveled to a distant country, and there he squandered his property in dissolute living.

Luke 15:14 When he had spent everything, a severe famine took place throughout that country, and he began to be in need.

Luke 15:15 So he went and hired himself out to one of the citizens of that country, who sent him to his fields to feed the pigs.

Luke 15:16 He would gladly have filled himself with the pods that the pigs were eating; and no one gave him anything.

Luke 15:17 But when he came to himself he said, 'How many of my father's hired hands have bread enough and to spare, but here I am dying of hunger!

Luke 15:18 I will get up and go to my father, and I will say to him, “Father, I have sinned against heaven and before you;

Luke 15:19 I am no longer worthy to be called your son; treat me like one of your hired hands.” ’

Luke 15:20 So he set off and went to his father. But while he was still far off, his father saw him and was filled with compassion; he ran and put his arms around him and kissed him.

Luke 15:21 Then the son said to him, ‘Father, I have sinned against heaven and before you; I am no longer worthy to be called your son.’

Luke 15:22 But the father said to his slaves, ‘Quickly, bring out a robe—the best one—and put it on him; put a ring on his finger and sandals on his feet.

Luke 15:23 And get the fatted calf and kill it, and let us eat and celebrate;

Luke 15:24 for this son of mine was dead and is alive again; he was lost and is found!’ And they began to celebrate.

That story is my story, and maybe your story. And our story can end with great celebration because God throws a huge party when we come back to Him.

Maybe we have walked away from God recently or years ago, rejecting Him or ignoring Him....never believing that God would freely offer His blessings so we demanded it from Him or from life and ran.

But life has shown us, we can’t do it on our power, there is not the fulfillment that we thought we should have.

Our world, the world has gone to pot...there has to be something better.

And yet God is the waiting father, and when the father saw the son coming back down that road, he took off and started to run. He didn’t care how silly he looked running in his robes.

He ran down that road to see his son return.

Filled with compassion, maybe tears streaming down his face he ran up to him and hugged him and kissed and then he declared to all that he would give him his signet ring to say that I restore him to his sonship,

and give him shoes to say he is no longer a slave

and he would put his best robe on him to say to all it will be like he never left.

Even though the son hurt him, and took his money, he would accept him, restore him and kill the best fatted calf and throw a party in his honor....for he once was lost and now was found.

And that might be your story. Maybe you have turned away from, misunderstood or ignored God. And He has so many riches to offer you and his strength and power and a way to be victorious and fulfilled.

And maybe you have not realized until more fully today...this is a God who has been trying for years to tell you that He wants to be with you....and be Your God....a close friend.

Jesus said....no longer do I call you servants but friends. Yes, He is the Lord, and we need to follow Him, but he offers friendship if we but just accept Him and allow Him every day to be the one in charge of our life....for He knows best, especially when we are fearful or afraid.

Maybe you want to today pray a prayer that says okay God, I want to learn to follow you and believe it when you say,
Do not fear, for I am with you,
Do not be afraid, for I am your God,
I will strengthen you, I will help you, I will raise you up with my victorious right hand. Let's pray.