



Wednesday Prayer

Palm Sunday – Living without fear

There is no fear in love, but perfect love casts out fear; for fear has to do with punishment, and whoever fears has not reached perfection in love. 1 John 4:18

When people experience actual or perceived threat of severe harm, their brain chemistry changes. Even in the absence of physical injury, trauma can disrupt memory and mimic real brain damage. Memories of trauma can be kept hidden from one's consciousness, due to shame or fear; the memory is too much to handle. Or sometimes intrusive images or unpleasant thoughts cause profound anxiety, even if the thoughts are not about the specific trauma. Emotions surrounding the trauma are often experienced more powerfully than everyday feelings. Unresolved trauma memories may lead to Post Traumatic Stress Disorder (PTSD), which can include irritability, nightmares, emotional detachment, and heightened startle response. Life after trauma delivers very real symptoms that can last a lifetime if not treated.

In the counseling work that I have done with trauma survivors, including war veterans, refugees, and those who have experienced sexual assault and domestic violence, there is never a perfect path to recovery. As a sexual assault survivor myself, my faith in God has been an integral part of my healing. It saddens me when I see others fearful and distrusting of a God who they feel has abandoned them in their worst hour. While we must meet survivors at the point at which they come to us, and we must allow them each to work through their experiences in their own way, one passage of the Bible appears to have universal appeal to many who have experienced trauma.

1 John speaks about love, fear, punishment and perfection: important concepts in working through trauma. Love and fear, he says, are incompatible; we cannot truly experience both at the same time. Love produces boldness, giving us courage to dispel fear. Courage scatters fear, and signals all that frightens us that new ground has been broken. The audacity of moving forward from fear builds more courage and invites more trust and more love. It is the profound and sacred purpose of the church to respond to those who have been traumatized with the love that we know to be from Christ. No other force will ever be stronger than Christ's love.

Lord of Courage and Justice, fill us with your exquisite, fear-dispelling love today! Amen.

April is Sexual Assault Awareness Month (SAAM). The goal of SAAM is to raise public awareness about sexual harassment, abuse, and assault and educate communities on how to prevent it. Visit <https://www.nsvrc.org/saam> for excellent tools and resources for yourself, your home, and your community. Recognizing the increase of sexual assault while we are sheltering in place during this global pandemic, let's do all we can to learn and boldly act for prevention.

Written by Meg Blaine Corrigan, Christian author, blogger, counselor, and sexual assault survivor. Find more of Meg's works at www.megcorrigan.com.