

## **Scripture Reading: Psalm 56:3; 2 Timothy :7**

*What time I am afraid, I will trust in God. ~ Psalm 56: 3*

*For God hath not given us the spirit of fear; but of power, and of love, and of a sound mind. ~ 2 Timothy 1:7*

Fear has been a frequent companion or emotional experience in my life. I attribute my fear or anxiety to several factors, as I have learned to know it as an adult. I had older brothers who hid around corners and would jump out and cause a "startle" response. I had a mother with severe mental health issues, and some of her illnesses caused me to worry more than necessary. I also developed a sense of heightened responsibility and thought that if I did everything "right," things would be better.

Naturally, I know now my reasoning has false assumptions. However, the presence of fear, anxiety, and worry encompass me at times. I find the most effective way to deal with these challenging emotions is to turn to the Bible and some of our heroes of the faith.

Moses expressed fear by running away from the murder of an Egyptian mistreating a Hebrew slave. He again voiced fear when God appeared to him in the burning bush and called him to be the one to lead the people of Israel out of bondage to freedom. The apostle Paul advised his young friend, Timothy, on the power of God's love and our mind's creative possibilities to have resilience in times of challenge. I could continue a long list of women and men from the Bible who expressed fear and how God honored their emotions and enabled them to fulfill the call of God upon their lives.

I recognize anxiety as a healthy response to danger and challenge. I also realize we need the help of professionals in dealing with anxiety. As I have dealt with anxiety throughout my life, I have used a combination of coping mechanisms to address it. The bedrock in my dealing with fear, worry, and anxiety is to take a spiritual review of what God has done for me in my life. Alongside the retrospective reminder, I find quoting scriptures where fear is addressed as the most potent antidote.

Matthew's Gospel quotes Jesus and expresses it best: "Be not anxious for your life, what you shall eat, or what you shall drink; nor for your body... Behold the birds of the air, that they do not sow or reap nor gather into barns; your Heavenly Father feeds them. Are you not of much more value than they (Matthew 5:25-34 is the reference)."

Prayer: Holy Father, help us remember to lean into you in our fear, worry, and anxiety. Help me as a pastor not to worry about what my parishioners will think of my honesty in my human journey. Let us accept our emotions and recognize how You use them for your good. I ask this in the name of Jesus, our Savior. Amen.

~ Submitted by Marcus Dodson for the Twenty-Eighth Reading of Lent