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Good morning. Let's pray. Heavenly Father, we praise you and we thank you that you have brought us all here together today to learn from your word. Help us to understand what is written here. Please speak it to our hearts. Open the eyes of our understanding. Help us to grow closer to you. In the name of your son, Jesus, we pray. Amen. Our verse today is Job 2828, which says, Behold, the fear of the Lord. That is wisdom and to depart from evil is understanding. The phrase fear of the Lord doesn't really seem to fit into American Christianity. Most churches. A lot of the churches that I've been around to and visited a lot of times they kind of have an atmosphere of this is a club. This is where we hang out and drink coffee and, you know, chit chat in each other's homes and talk about philosophies and and, of course, eat. And that phrase fear of the Lord doesn't doesn't seem like it has any place in that kind of environment. And so when I would read, there's a lot of verses in the Bible that say the fear of the Lord. And when I was a kid, I would come across a verse like that and I would ask someone, is this mean we're supposed to be afraid of God? And people would try and explain and they say, No, this just means you have to be in awe of God and you have to respect him and stuff like that. But as I grew up and I kept reading more Bible stories, I I started to think that maybe maybe fear of the Lord is not quite so far off the mark. I read stories, for example, about what God did to Pharaoh and the Egyptians for enslaving the Children of Israel. And I read about how God, because of the rebellious spirit of the Israelites, led them 40 years through the desert until all of the complainers had died off. I read about the story about again, more people came up to Moses and started complaining and and God opened up the earth and swallowed up all of the people who were complaining, men, women and children. When they eventually made it to the promised land, Joshua went through and slaughtered the enemies of the God at God's command. And again, later on, as there was more rebellion, the Israelites were allowed to be taken into captivity for hundreds of years. And this was all because of rebellion and sin. And so when I read about that stuff, fear of the Lord sounds legitimate. And and I think maybe that in the American church, it's a little under emphasized. It's funny when when I told people that I'm going to be speaking on the fear of the Lord, almost everyone immediately starts to kind of soften the edge of that of that message. I said, I'm just being on the fear of the Lord. And the first thing they say is, well, but it means and. And that's because we're uncomfortable thinking of the fear of the Lord. Now, another reason that we're uncomfortable thinking about it is because we only have a human conception of fear. When we're afraid of something in this world. It's usually because whatever we're afraid of is is capricious. It may hurt us by surprise and without warning and and just on a whim. And in this world, those are the kinds of things we're afraid of, you know, like like snakes, you know, you sneak up on a snake or whatever, he'll just decide to bite you, you know, and and or anyway. So I hate snakes. As soon as I start talking about him, I lose my train of thought. There are other things people are afraid of. But but another another great example is when children in this world fear an abusive parent, you know, we have a parent who just who maybe drinks or just can't control their temper and they just know that they have to constantly walk on eggshells around that parent because they never know what's going to set them off, what's going to put them in a bad mood. And and that's not the kind of fear that we have towards God. All right. And so if that's your only definition of fear, then I agree with you that we're not supposed to be afraid of the law of God. But at the same time, this is a God who is righteous in his judgment and who thoroughly hates sin to the point where he has destroyed whole nations because of sin. God does love us. There's no question of that. The cross is the greatest evidence of that love. But the fact that we are here living and breathing today, that we have beautiful sun, that we have rain watering our plants, that we have days of rest. This is all evidence that God loves us. But our delight in his love needs to be tempered by a healthy respect for his power and his sovereignty. You see, when he loves us and when he forgives us, it's because he chooses to. It's not because he's under some compulsion to. That should put into us some healthy, holy trembling. And as disciples, we've been talking about discipleship as disciples, we need to keep this this balance in mind, this healthy respect in mind that yes, he loves us, but yes, he is thoroughly powerfully against sin and wickedness and unrighteousness. We are real quick to say, greater is he who is in me than he was in the world. And if God is for us, then who can be against us? And we're so quick to point out that God is so amazing and big and powerful when when he's on our side. But the Bible says that God searches through the land to strengthen those whose hearts are fully committed to him. And and and at what point after God stands up and and fights for us and after he's on our side, do we say, OK, thanks for fighting for us. Now I'm just going to go back to my life, the old ways, the way it was before. When God's fighting them, he's big and powerful, but but when it comes to my own sinfulness, suddenly he's a big, soft teddy bear and a pushover. Universalists have fallen victim to the love lie, the idea that God is completely love and that there's no room for justice or judgment. And it is true that God loves us and he has made a way through the cross for us to be saved, but this does not in any way diminish his hatred of sin. God is love, but he is also awesome, completely just and terrible in his wrath. Isaiah sixty four eight is quoted a lot, but you probably aren't always sure where it's being quoted from. But now, oh Lord, you are our father. We are the clay and you are our potter and we are all the work of your hand. He is the potter and we are just clay in his hands. We are where the clay is nothing compared to the potter. The potter can do whatever he wants with the clay. If he chooses to destroy one of us or destroy all of us, he is completely just in doing so. That's that's hard to accept. That's hard to believe. Anything because God is just and holy, whatever he does is just and holy. And sometimes what he does, we don't understand, but we must just believe God is just and holy. Therefore, what he has done, what he has allowed is he is still just and holy. The perfect example of this is Pharaoh. I was talking with someone, we were reading the Bible and it talks about when when Moses went after he'd spent 40 years being raised by Moses and then he went off into the wilderness to live as a farmer for 40 years. And then God, through the burning bush, calls him back and says, all right, now I need you to lead my children out of Egypt. And so Moses goes up and confronts Pharaoh and says you need to let God's people go. And the Bible says that God hardened Pharaoh's heart. God hardened Pharaoh's heart. And I was talking to someone who just couldn't accept that. They thought that that would somehow be unjust if God harden Pharaoh's heart. But that wouldn't be fair. But anything God does is just and it is fair. And a lot of times we don't understand, but we just have to believe and accept. We sometimes have the foolish notion that God is hamstrung by his own love and that we can just get away with whatever we want, like spoiled children, because he has to love us, he has to forgive us, and we're off the hook. That is not the case. Luke 13, starting 24, strive to enter through the narrow gate. For many, I say to you, will seek to enter and will not be able. When once the master of the house has risen up and shut the door and you begin to stand outside and knock at the door, saying, Lord, Lord, open for us. And he will answer and say to you, I do not know you where you are from. Then you will begin to say, we ate and drank in your presence and you taught in our streets. But he will say, I tell you, I do not know you where you are from. Depart from me all you workers of iniquity. There will be weeping and gnashing of teeth when you see Abraham and Isaac and Jacob and all the prophets in the kingdom of God and yourselves thrust out. This should sober us up. Ephesians two eight says we are saved by faith. But as James two twenty six points out, faith is tested by works and faith without works is dead faith that cannot save. So please don't think that if you just uttered some sinners prayer when you were a kid, that doesn't mean you can just go back to the life you had before. God calls you to a new life, a transformed life, which is what he works in you through his Holy Spirit. Let's look at Job. Alex Riker gave a great sermon on job at the youth group this week inspired this morning's message. Starting chapter one, verse one, I don't get to say that very often. There was a man in the land of us whose name was Job. And that man was blameless and upright and one who feared God and shunned evil. Blameless and upright. You know, a lot of us don't think of ourselves as blameless and upright. But here's a guy before Jesus, before the indwelling power of the Holy Spirit. Here is a guy who lived a life that was blameless and upright, which tells me, which I hope tells you that it can be done. But what is the secret? What is the key? The very next words he feared God. And consequently shunned evil. Fear of the Lord is the beginning of wisdom. So Job has seven sons and three daughters. He also has sheep, camels, oxen, donkeys and a very large household. So that this man was the greatest of all the people of the East. This is something else that I noticed during Wednesday's Bible study, and it just kind of blew my mind. This is the Bill Gates of his time. All right. He is the biggest, greatest, most powerful guy. And it talks about how his sons would go and and each they would rotate each of the sons because there's seven sons or seven days of the week. So each son took one day of the week and they would invite all the brothers and sisters and they have a big old feast in their house and they would just go through each day house to house, feast to feast. And it says, so it was that when the days of feasting had run their course, Job would send and sanctify them and he would rise early in the morning and offer burnt offerings according to the number of them all. For Job said, it may be that my sons have sinned and cursed God in their hearts. And Job did this regularly. God was Job was so fearful of God that not only did he live his own right upright, his own life upright and blameless, but he also offered sacrifices on behalf of his sons, lest one of them had sinned and offended God. So it came to pass that there was this day that all the angels presented themselves before God and Satan was there and God said, Satan, where have you been? And Satan said, been walking around on Earth for a while and God said, oh, well, have you seen my servant Job? There is none like him on the earth, a blameless and upright man, one who fears God and shuns evil. If case there was any question about the uprightness of Job, God himself now says there is no one like him on the earth. He is that upright and blameless because of his fear of God. And so Satan says, well, does Job fear God for nothing? Have you not made a hedge around him, around his household and around all that he has on every side? You have blessed the work of his hands and his possessions have increased in the land. But now stretch out your hand and touch all that he has and he will surely curse you to your face. And the Lord said to Satan, behold, all that he has is in your power. Only do not lay a hand on his person. So Satan says, yeah, the God, the reason he loves you and fears you and blesses and praises you is because you're so good to him. And God says, all right, you can touch anything of Job's that you want, but you can't touch Job. And so it still happens that one day, Job's doing whatever he does, and his messenger comes in and says, the oxen were plowing and the donkeys were feeding beside them. When the Sabians raided them and took them away, indeed, they have killed the servants with the edge of the sword and I alone have escaped to tell you. While that guy was talking, another guy runs up and says, the fire of God fell from heaven and burned up the sheep and and the servants. Consumed them and I alone have escaped to tell you. While that guy was talking, another guy runs up the child deans formed three bands and raided the camels and took them away and killed the servants with the edge of the sword. And I alone have escaped to tell you. And while that guy was speaking, another guy runs up and says, your sons and daughters were eating and drinking in the oldest brother's house. And then suddenly a great wind came from across the wilderness and struck the four corners of the house. It fell on the young people and they are all dead. And I alone have escaped to tell you. So we previously established that Job's wealth was in his oxen, camels, sheep, donkeys and family. And now we have these four servants running in to tell him that it is all gone. All of it is gone, except for these four servants. And as we'll find out later, this one wife, which as we'll also find out later, was probably the cruelest thing Satan could have done is not kill her. You'll see. So Job's lost everything. So what does he do? He rises up, he tears his robe, he shaves his head, he falls to the ground. And he worships God. The most powerful, rich man in his country loses everything and falls down and worships God. Saying, naked, I came from my mother's womb and naked shall I return there. The Lord gave and now the Lord has taken away. Blessed be the name of the Lord. I try to be a pretty good guy, but I'm not sure that I could say that. I'm trying to be that person. And it says that in all of this, Job didn't sin, nor did he charge God with wrongdoing. Catch that now. Job rightly pointed out that the Lord has taken away. OK, he didn't charge God with wrong. He didn't sin, but he acknowledged that it is by the will of God that good comes into our lives and is by God's permission that bad comes into our lives. And yet he worships God. That's hard. But when you have the fear of God in your heart, when you realize that you were just clay in a potter's hands, then you can you can offer up that worship. So then there's another day all of the angels are again before God. And then once again, Satan makes an appearance. And once again, God says, Satan, where you been, Satan says, walking around on Earth. And God says, oh, well, have you seen Joe? There is none like him on Earth, blameless and upright, one who fears God and shuns evil. And still he holds fast to his integrity, although you incited me against him to destroy him without cause. He says, Satan, he passed your little test. He's still the most upright and blameless man on Earth. And Satan says, well, of course he is. You didn't let me touch him. And so God says, all right, you can touch him, but you can't kill him. God believes in Joe. So Satan went out from the Lord and struck Joe with painful boils from the sole of his foot to the crown of his head. And so Job took for himself a pot shard with which to scrape himself while he sat in the midst of the ashes. And his wife comes up. She says, do you still hold fast to your integrity? Curse God and die. When I'm in situations that are just even a fraction of what Job has gone through. I'm already beginning to tell myself what Job's wife was telling him. Look at all the trouble you've gotten into. Look at all the bad things that have come into your life. Be angry at God. But Job says, you speak as one of the foolish women speaks. Shall we indeed accept good from God and shall we not accept adversity? In all this, Job did not sin with his lips. Therefore, he rightly said that he is accepting adversity from God. God allowed adversity to come into his life. That wasn't a lie. It wasn't wrong. It wasn't sin. But at the same time, he acknowledged that God is the potter and we are the clay and whatever comes. We will accept it and worship God, saying the Lord gives, the Lord takes away. Blessed be the name of the Lord. I started. I started thinking about this. This message today, because I was reading in Luke 17. There's a section where Jesus starts talking about if you have the faith of a mustard seed, you can tell that tree to just uproot itself and go replant itself in the ocean. And then right after saying that, he just immediately goes into talking about and you know what? If you have a servant who's like plowing and working hard and you get hungry, what do you do? You tell that servant to make you a meal and do you invite him to sit down with you and eat? No, the servants job is to wait on you. And I was just I was standing there just scratching my head saying, how on earth did we get to talk about having the faith to move this tree and then suddenly telling a servant that he should be a servant? Like, what does that faith and what is going on? So I opened up one of the concordance that Keith had has sent ahead. He's got a nice little library he's building up in there. And in and it pointed out, well, in order to understand the part about the faith, you need to actually start back a paragraph. So what what happened in the previous paragraph was that Jesus just finished telling everyone all his disciples, saying, if your brother sins against you and comes to you and says, I repent, you must forgive him. And if he sins against you seven times in one day and seven times comes and says, I repent, you must forgive him seven times in the same day. Forgive, forgive, forgive no matter if he is. I mean, I'm sure we've all had people who have betrayed us and hurt us and sinned against us. I don't think I've ever had someone who's really sinned against me seven times in one day. That's a lot. I would be really short on patience. I don't know if I could do it. And that's what the disciples are thinking. And so the disciples say, Lord, increase our faith. They're saying, Jesus, we don't have the faith to forgive that much. And Jesus says. If you just have a speck of faith, you can tell trees to go replant themselves. You see, the point is, is it's not how much faith you have. Faith is not your problem. Fear is your problem. Which of you having a servant plowing or tending sheep will say to him when he is coming from the field, come at once and sit down to eat? But will he not rather say to him, prepare something for my supper and good yourself to serve me till I have eaten and drunk? And afterward, you will eat and drink. Does he think that servant because he did the things that were commanded of him? I think not. So likewise, you, when you have done all those things which you are commanded, say, we are unprofitable servants. We have done what was our duty to do. Jesus says, forgive, forgive, forgive. The disciples say we don't have the faith to do that. Jesus says you you have all the faith you need. What you don't have is fear of the one who is commanding you to do it. You still have pride. You still refuse to bow the knee to the one who is commanding you to forgive. You have all the faith you need. Faith is not the problem. You don't realize that you are just clay in the potter's hand, that you are just a servant. And if you spend every ounce of energy and strength for the rest of your life obeying the will of God, then when you are done, you have the right to say, I am but an unprofitable servant who has only done his master's will. Unprofitable servant if we do every single thing. Job, this amazing, blameless, upright guy. The one who God pointed out as head and shoulders above everyone else. Only had the right to say, I am but an unprofitable servant who has done his master's will. When you have the fear of the Lord in you. Then you can begin to understand the command that says, love the Lord, your God, with all your heart, all your soul, all your mind, all your strength. Before you have the fear of God in your heart, you hear that and you're like, all my heart, all my strength. That's asking a lot. But once you rightly fear the Lord, you can obey with all your heart, all your soul, all your mind, all your strength. And then after you have done with all of your energy, you can say, I'm just an unprofitable servant who has done his master's will. We read this last week from 1 Corinthians 6 19. Do you not know that your body is a temple of the Holy Spirit who is in you whom you have from God and you are not your own? For you were bought at a price. Therefore glorify God in your body and in your spirit, which are God's. You are not your own anymore. You are the servant of God. You are clay in the potter's hands and we need to get on our knees and just say, yes, Lord, that is the fear of God. This is the narrow gate. It is the place where we no longer get angry with God over our trials, where we stop making selfish demands. But in all things we say the Lord gave and the Lord has taken away. Blessed be the name of the Lord. Let's think about this during our open worship. I know this is a very difficult. Teaching to accept because it strikes right at. The core of our pride. But if we choose humility, if we choose to cling. To righteousness. Then God will point us out to the angels and say. Look at this one who who is so upright. And blameless. When you have the fear of the Lord correct in your heart. Then you will have the power to say no to temptation. The power to forgive. And the strength to be a disciple. Let's pray. Dear God. You are the potter and we are just the clay in your hands. And you love us, but we are not capable of understanding your ways. And so, God, when things come around that we don't understand. Help us to just say the Lord gives and the Lord takes away. Blessed be the name of the Lord. Pray this in the name of your son, Jesus. Amen.