

BLAINE MEMORIAL UNITED METHODIST CHURCH  
LENTEN SERIES 2016

FEARLESS: The Courage to Question

Worship Service • March 20, 2016

Great Love Casts Out Fear

• Introduction: Food for Thought •

*Some of us think holding on makes us strong but sometimes it is letting go.*

- Hermann Hesse

*Love is what we were born with. Fear is what we learned here.*

- Marianne Williamson

*If we deny love that is given to us, if we refuse to give love because we fear pain or loss, then our lives will be empty, our loss greater.*

- Oprah Winfrey

*Love takes off masks that we fear we cannot live without and know we cannot live within.*

- James Baldwin

*There are two basic motivating forces: fear and love. When we are afraid, we pull back from life. When we are in love, we open to all that life has to offer with passion, excitement, and acceptance. We need to learn to love ourselves first, in all our glory and our imperfections. Evolution and all hopes for a better world rest in the fearlessness and open-hearted vision of people who embrace life.*

- John Lennon

*There is no fear in love; but perfect love casts out fear.*

- 1 John 4:1

## • The Word of God •

*Read with a vulnerable heart. Expect to be blessed in the reading.  
Read as one awake, one waiting for the Beloved. Read with reverence.*

**Lectio (READ):** *On the first reading, simply open yourself to the presence of God. Read the passage slowly and prayerfully, allowing short pauses between sentences.*

**Meditatio (REFLECT):** *On the second prayerful reading of the passage, listen for a particular word or a phrase through which God wants to speak to you. You will notice your attention being drawn to something (or if this doesn't happen, just choose a word). Once you have "received" the word or phrase, begin to silently meditate on that.*

**Oratio (RESPOND):** *On the third prayerful reading of the passage, listen now for God's invitation, and respond from your heart.*

**Contemplatio (REST):** *The focus of the fourth prayerful reading of the passage is to simply rest now in the love that God has for you.*

*From noon until three in the afternoon the whole earth was dark. At about three Jesus cried out with a loud shout, "Eli, Eli, lama sabachthani," which means, "My God, my God, why have you left me?" After hearing him, some standing there said, "He's calling Elijah." One of them ran over, took a sponge full of vinegar, and put it on a pole. He offered it to Jesus to drink. But the rest of them said, "Let's see if Elijah will come and save him." Again Jesus cried out with a loud shout. Then he died. Look, the curtain of the sanctuary was torn in two from top to bottom. The earth shook, the rocks split, and the bodies of many holy people who had died were raised. After Jesus' resurrection they came out of their graves and went into the holy city where they appeared to many people. When the centurion and those with him who were guarding Jesus saw the earthquake and what had just happened, they were filled with awe and said, "This was certainly God's Son."*

—Matthew 27:45-54

## • Reflection Questions from Sermon •

- *What do you make of Jesus' silence throughout the whole Passion narrative?*
- *Who is to be held responsible for the death of Jesus? Consider the whole story – did anyone hold back their judgment of him (Roman and Jewish authorities, the crowd who released Barabbas, etc)?*
- *Where is God when things are not going well? Have we been abandoned?*
- *What is your relationship with faith? Have you treated it as a band-aid or something to take the pain away?*
- *If someone asked you, "Why did Jesus die?" – how would you respond?*
- *When you are afraid, what helps you feel better? When you are anxious and full of fear, what fills you with boldness and confidence? Is it an image? Is it a phrase?*
- *"God is with me." "God is with us." Can you say this in your quiet time throughout this week? Can you remind yourself, both in times of difficulty and of celebration, that God is with you?*

• Notes from the Sermon - Rev. Shalom Agtarap •

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*please read this section after hearing today's sermon*

*We shy away from difficult things – we do not like discomfort and pain. For example, the events of Holy Week are not as well attended as Easter.*

*We are not alone in this discomfort! Even the most faithful of Jesus' followers stepped away during his arrest, trial, and death sentence. The amazing thing is that other, unlikely people, stepped up.*

*Within this text is a tale of sorrow whose power is great enough to disrupt our lives and transform our hearts – and so we must discern its meaning just as the disciples were forced to do.*

*Brene Brown said: I thought faith would say, "I'll take away the pain and discomfort." But what it ended up saying is, "I'll sit with you in it."*

*"Be assured that God is grieving today too. God's weeping too." For Brene Brown, this changed everything. "It's just about [God] being with you."*

*The witness of God through Jesus' life, particularly in the events of Holy Week remind us that we are not alone – that God's love perseveres in even the darkest night where we need the light the most.*

*The point of the cross is not finally a suffering and death; it is, rather, that a relationship holds. There is a love stronger than death, that can withstand whatever the forces of evil do against it, and that can hold suffering even as it tries to alleviate it. The meaning of the cross can be understood finally only within the whole of the good news of the promise of God to overcome terror, enfold us in Life, and dwell with us forever.*

*Both winning and losing happen all the time – together – and in that complex journey is where we find Jesus ...owning all of it with us while defeating it. God is with us!*