

4<sup>th</sup> Sunday in End Times – Christ the King Sunday – Year A – November 20, 2011 – Faith Lutheran, Radcliff, KY  
Based on 1Corinthians 15:20-28 written by Pastor Paul Horn

### **“A Christian has no Fear Factor”**

Yes, it's back! Fear Factor - a game show on NBC challenges contestants to face their most primal fears through a series of stunts that test their physical endurance and mental resolve. If fear stops them and they are unable or unwilling to complete a challenge, they are eliminated. Some stunts include eating gross foods and animal parts, lying in a glass bed full of bugs and daredevil stunts involving helicopters and speed boats. The team that overcomes their fears wins a cool \$50,000.

That kind of money would go a long way in this economy, where many citizens in the United States are facing their own fear factors - unemployment, rising gas, food and medical costs, historic low interest rates, and a stagnant housing market – all things that can be very scary. There are unique fear factors in our own community – the fear of redeployment. Although spouses and children will be more than excited to have their loved one home from combat, they may be apprehensive of the reintegration process, “How will my spouse adjust after being in a state of constant hyper vigilance and adrenaline highs?” Others in this community have loved ones who are now preparing for deployment - the 3<sup>rd</sup> Sustainment Command – the fear factors they face are, “How will I cope after spouse/mommy/daddy leave?”

Fear factors return to our lives again and again. This morning in our lesson the Apostle Paul talks about a fear factor that many if not most people face - death. **“Death came through a man... as in Adam all die...”** and he talks about death as our enemy. (vs21,22,26) Death is our enemy, isn't it? Because death is not natural. It is not just part of “the cycle of life”. God never meant for human beings to die. He designed Adam and Eve to live forever. But Satan brought sin into this world through Adam and Eve's disobedience. Because sin entered the world, sin now reigns supreme. All of Adam and Eve's sons and daughters and every generation that has followed possessed this sinful self – right up to today. God prescribed death as the consequence of sin. That is why Paul wrote, **“As in Adam all die.”**

Some may be thinking, “Pastor Horn, let's not talk about this today. After all, it's Christ the King Sunday and we're having our potluck and gift basket auction today. Besides, cemeteries and funeral homes creep me out.” But the reality is that you and I will have to face our own graves. The reality of death slaps us in the face when we read the obituaries and notice that death does not discriminate with age, race, sex or social status. The reality of death slaps us in the face again when we or a loved one visits the doctor and the doc says, “You need to go in for tests... now!” When find yourself facing the grave, your fear factor is higher than the thought of lying in a box filled with cockroaches on some weird game show. You know they'll pull you out after a certain amount of time. But not with death. The casket is a much more permanent location.

Death, the death of a loved one, joblessness, plunging Dow Jones averages, deployments, redeployments certainly affect our lives. But when we act like they have greater say in our lives than our God, then we are guilty of idolatry. When fear and anxiety hold more sway in our outlook on life than God's promises do, when fear affects our attitudes and behaviors, then we have put God in second place in our hearts and lives. We

have fallen down at the altar of fear and worshiped it more than our God. And some may say, “But how can you not have fear and anxiety when these things happen in your life? How can you not feel some apprehension when the future is uncertain?”

But God says to you today, “You have no reason to fear, because today we are going to face your fears.” And no, we’re not going to cover you with honeybees and see how long you can last before you freak out. Apply for a game show if you want that. God confronts your fears of the present and future by pointing you to the past.

Paul wrote in his letter, “**In Adam all die.**” The fact is that Christ also died on the cross, which we heard in the Gospel from Matthew 27 today. Jesus was a son of Adam, but he is also the Son of God. And as such, He had no sin. He was never afraid in his life. He never worried about money or possessions. He never showed fear even when he knew that he would face a brutal execution. He didn’t run away from the Soldiers when they arrested him, but he allowed them to bind his hands, allowed his face to be beaten and spit upon. He willingly gave his back to their brutal flogging. He willingly marched to Calvary, carrying his instrument of death, and carrying your sins of fear and anxiety in himself. There on the hill, he allowed your sins of fear and worry to die with him and to be buried in the tomb with his body.

My friends, that’s how we deal with the reality of our sin. We take our sins of fear and worry and anxiety to the cross and see that our sins have already died with Christ. We deal with the reality of the consequence of our sin, death, by looking into Christ’s tomb. Just like the women who had supported Jesus throughout his ministry walked with sad and heavy hearts to the tomb on that first Easter Sunday morning. Death had put a stranglehold on the one who had raised the dead. When they arrived at his grave, his body was not where it was supposed to be! Instead, two angels sat in the tomb and said to the women, “Do not be afraid! He is not here! He is risen! Just as he said...” Yes, the empty tomb makes all fear disappear.

God confronts your fear of death by showing you his Son’s empty tomb, and says, “**Do not be afraid.**” Did you know that phrase is used over 65 times in the Bible? “**Do not be afraid.**” In the Old Testament there is a story recorded about a man named Jehoshaphat. He was king over the southern territory of Judah. During the years of his reign two neighboring nations, Moab and Ammon, declared war on Judah. The scouts came back from their reconnaissance mission with the report, “**A vast army is coming against you.**” But the LORD said to King Jehoshaphat, “**Do not be afraid or discouraged because of the vast army. For the battle is not yours, but God’s.**” (2Chronicles 20)

Although you and I must face the reality of our sins, the battle is the Lord’s. Your sins were defeated on the cross in Christ’s body. Although you and I must face the reality of our enemy death, the battle is not ours, but the Lord’s. Our confidence in death is in the Apostle Paul’s words, “**But Christ has indeed been raised from the dead.**” (vs20) Christ defeated death through his resurrection.

We still know the sobering reality that death will still come for each of us, “**As in Adam all die.**” But death will not win the war. Paul gives us a glimpse of the future, “**Then the end will come, when he hands over the kingdom to God the Father after he has destroyed all dominion, authority and power.**” (vs24) “**He has put**

**everything under his feet.”** (vs27) In the Old Testament, when kings like Jehoshaphat defeated an enemy on the field of battle, the victorious king would place his foot on the neck of the defeated king as a sign of complete victory. On the Last Day, when the conquering hero comes on the clouds with his angels, he will place his foot on the neck of death and Satan. He will prove his defeat of his enemies is complete by raising all dead people. Death will not be able to hold its victims in the grave. Our confidence rests in Paul’s description of those who die in vs20, **“those who have fallen asleep.”** The King will come for us again and raise our dead bodies from the grave.

Not only does Christ’s resurrection guarantee us a resurrection of the body, but a resurrection to life eternal. **“When Christ comes, those who belong to him [will be made alive].”** (vs22-23) My friends, here is your confidence in death! Through faith in Christ we are “those who belong to him.” Through faith in our resurrected and living King, we will be made alive in him. Our bodies will be like his resurrected body; eternal, immortal, without sin, perfect and holy. When you are lying on your deathbed, this is the confidence you will have: I am in Christ, I belong to him; he has defeated death by his resurrection, through faith has given me the same resurrection. I gladly meet death, for it is but a sleep. My King will come for me again and raise my dead body and bring me to his heavenly kingdom.” The Fear Factor prize is \$50,000. Jesus says, **“Do not be afraid. Be faithful even to the point of death, and I will give you the crown of life.”** (Rev 2.10) That doesn’t even compare.

Perhaps you remember this hymn stanza we sang a few weeks ago, “No guilt in life, no fear in death, this is the power of Christ in me; from life’s first cry to final breath, Jesus commands my destiny. No power of hell, no scheme of man can ever pluck me from his hand: till he returns or calls me home, here in the power of Christ I’ll stand.” (CWS 752, st.4, In Christ Alone by Keith Getty & Stuart Townsend) In Christ a Christian has no fear factor.

For if Christ reigns over my sins and my grave, then he reigns over everything else in my life. Then I will have no fear of unemployment, redeployment, deployment. I will have no fear in prosperity and poverty, in good health and in illness. He will do what is best for me in all areas of my life. And so I will trust in him, even when life feels like I’m participating in some cruel game show. I will look to him who has faced all of my fears and has conquered them all. I will have no fear in life or in death. I will die with the confidence of knowing that I will live in a place with my King where I will be free from fear, forever.

Come quickly, Lord Jesus. Amen.