

## Immerse Day 75 :: May 14

This past 14 months has taught us a lot about fear. It has taught us that we go crazy when we are afraid. Speaker and comedian Bob Stromberg spoke about this and as an illustration, he would take a huge balloon and begin to blow it up on stage. Once it was big, he would walk out into the audience, stop, and continue to blow it up. Soon, he would take out goggles and put them on, and keep blowing it up. Next, it would be ear protection, and he'd keep blowing. He'd walk around the audience, blowing and blowing until the balloon popped from the pressure. He would then discuss the faces people made, the craziness they presented as the simple fear of a balloon approached.

In COVIDland, we've seen this craziness in toilet paper hoarding, crazy conspiracy theories, fallout bunker mentalities... fear makes us crazy. Even, or perhaps especially, legitimate fear. We have a right to fear COVID. It has killed over 3.3 million people worldwide. Many of us at LCC have dealt personally with loss due to COVID. It is big, scary, and worthy of our fear. And fear makes us crazy.

Whenever I read the story of Gideon, I thought it was unique to his situation that God told him to send home anyone who was afraid. Ultimately, God whittled Gideon's army down to 300 men, and then won the battle for them anyway. These 300 weren't soldiers; they were witnesses of God's power over Midian. But then in today's reading we find it again. "Is anyone here afraid or worried? If you are, you may go home before you frighten anyone else." You see, fear makes us crazy, but it is also contagious. Scared people scare people. And so God says that before their fear infects the whole army, the frightened among them should go home. Better to lose a soldier than gain a fear infection.

Why does COVID, or war, or division scare us so much? If we trace the power of that fear, it is ultimately death. We fear COVID because of its power to kill. We fear war because of its power to kill. We fear most anything because of its power, real or perceived, to kill. Yet as Christians we know, believe, and proclaim that God has defeated death. Will our bodies die? Yes they will. Will WE die? No, we won't. We will sleep and await God's day of Resurrection, when we will live forever with Him. This is our destiny. This is what death is for us.

Last summer, I lost my mom to a very short battle with cancer. And her death changed our family completely. I still fear losing my kids, my wife, and my family to death. But I'm truly not afraid of dying. If you are, it's ok. But you don't have to be. And if you are afraid, please be careful not to spread that fear around. It is contagious, and it will cause us to get crazy. Talk with a Christian friend or pastor about it, and allow yourself to be reminded that God has conquered death, and it has no victory, no sting for us.