

A few weeks ago I decided to join a gym. It had been about 15 years since I really worked out, so I thought it was due time to get back in shape.

So here I am, my first day in the gym – ready to work out. I had the right attitude, I was charged up, I stretched out really well, I had my weight lifting gloves on, checking out all of the different machines and free weights. I was ready.

Then I saw one of my favorite machines –the “Leg Machine.” I used to love this machine. You put weights on the machine, lay on your back and push the weights up with your legs.

I went up to it, put some heavy weights on the machine, laid down, released the safety mechanism, and started pressing that weight with my legs.

Bringing the weights down to you and pressing it back up again is called a repetition. My goal for that day was to do 10 repetitions – and I did. But after the 10<sup>th</sup> one – I thought I was going to die. That was some really heavy weights – probably too much for my first time back at the gym, but nonetheless, I did it - 10 repetitions.

I was so excited that I did 10 repetitions that I thought I would go to another machine for a while and press some more weights. Then as I worked my way over to another machine, my legs screaming the whole time, I turned around and saw this 90 year old lady laying down at my leg machine getting ready to use it.

But what hit me right then is that I forgot to take those big, very heavy weights off of the machine.

There was so much weight on there, enough to make me very sore, that I was scared to death that if she released the safety, that it would crush her.

In what must have looked like a bad action film, it was like slow motion – There she was, laying back in the machine, placing her hands on the safety mechanism, slowly releasing it, and here I was, on the other side of the room, running towards her in slow motion, mainly because my legs were still very sore.

I knew I would have to get there quickly, because once she released the safety, she would obviously be pinned under the weight and someone would have to pull it up off of her.

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Sometimes we get a little wrapped up in what is happening around us, we forget about the basics – like safety. I should have removed the weights when I was done with the machine.

But we get so wrapped up in things happening around us that we do forget.

Like in the story Donna read for us. Jesus, Joseph and Mary had traveled to Jerusalem for the Jewish Passover celebration with a group of people. And when the feast was over they all headed home. But Jesus wasn't with him – they accidentally left him behind. Mary and Joseph just thought he was somewhere in the group or people.

They just got a little too wrapped up in the festivities that they forgot to make sure their son was with the group.

Now here they are, a days journey outside of Jerusalem when they come to the realization that Jesus wasn't with them. Think what went through Mary's mind.

I think any of us would be scared to death if we realized that a day ago we left one of our kids behind in the big city.

Think of the fear that would go through your mind. Now, add on top of that – it just isn't any kid, but the kid that God entrusted you to take care of. The salvation of the world relies on this child – and you forgot about him and left him behind.

They had to have been scared to death.

Things happen in this world that scare us. Leaving our child behind, crushing a 90 year old lady with weights on a leg machine. Some of them can be avoided by just keeping our eyes open and paying attention to our surroundings.

But other things do happen in our lives. We can have fear in our lives at times.

And what are we usually afraid of?

If we really look at the root of our fear, typically we will see our fear is nothing more than fear of the unknown. Sometimes we just don't know what is going to happen and that scares us.

For some in this room, you or a loved one has had medical tests – and we are scared as we wait for the results. For some, the results come back good and you have felt relieved. For others, the results came back bad and then you felt even more scared.

Then we ask ourselves, "Now What?" What does the future hold? Does it include major surgery? Chemotherapy? Radiation? Dialysis? Or is it untreatable like Alzheimer's, Aids or something else? What is going to happen to life as we know it?

Maybe it isn't medical – maybe there is something else happening in our life that scares us. Maybe it is financial, legal troubles, or whatever it is. An unknown future can scare us.

Life as we know it can change in a heartbeat, and that can be very scary.

But we do not need to be alone in our fears and struggles. There are several things we can do to help us through fears in our lives.

Sometimes we can talk through our fears with friends and family. Then there is always the extended family – our church family. Those around us here – we do care.

Then there is also the one constant thing in our lives we can turn to. No matter how much the world around us changes over night, God is always there.

Even if we are so confused, mad or upset at him, he is still there for us. If you are mad at him, tell him. If you are scared, tell him. If you are upset, tell him.

But above all, don't turn your back on him and forget about him.

As the Letter to the Colossians told us – “let the peace of Christ rule in your hearts”.

Jesus is peace. Peace in our hearts when we are scared. He is the one constant in our lives.

When Mary found Jesus in the Temple – He showed just how constant he is. He said, “Why were you searching for me? Did you not know that I must be in my Father's house?”

In other words, “Why were you even searching – you should have came here first – where else would I be?”

Jesus is the one constant in our lives and we need to trust him more. When we are scared of what the future holds, we can always remember that the future for us always includes Jesus – even in the scariest of times – He is still there – and we don't have to go searching for him – we know where he is.

But we do need to remember to trust him a little more.

If every day we wake up and our first decision is that, in our hearts, we are going to trust God today, we will find our days will have a little less fear.

But we will still have fear in our lives. When I saw that 90 year old lady lay down on my leg machine with my heavy weights still on it, I was scared. When I saw her remove the safety from the machine I was very scared, when I saw the weights come down at her, I was terrified – and when I saw that she was able to do 10 repetitions more than I did without breaking a sweat – I was humbled.

It is normal to have fear of the unknown. But there is one thing I know for sure. There is a God who loves each and every one of us very much.

This same God sent us his son – so you and I can be saved and have everlasting life.

Now I don't know what heaven will look like, I don't know what it will feel like – but I know Jesus died for you and me and I know there is a heaven. And because I know these things and I try to put my trust in God, I have a little less fear of the unknown in my life.

A little less fear during those scary times.

And when I do feel scared or worried – I sometimes seek comfort from family or friends – but I always try to remember to seek out God.

And that can be hard. Have you ever known someone that always sees the silver lining on something? No matter what happens, they always say, "Praise God!"

You tell them, that you had a flat tire today, they say, "Praise God it wasn't raining." You tell them your daughter needs braces, they say, "Praise God you have a daughter."

If I am sitting there hammering a nail, miss the nail and hit my thumb, well, let's just say the first words out of my mouth aren't "Praise God!"

If you are one of those people that can look to God and thank him no matter what, - seriously, - you should praise God! What a great gift of faith that is.

For the rest of us, we may have a long way to go in our faith journey to get to that point. Many of us will never be to that point.

Future events may be unknown and scare us, but God is the one constant in our lives that will always be there.

So no matter where we are in our faith journey, even during those hard and scary times, let's try to remember to trust and love God through it all.

Pastor: Mark Maddox  
520-780-4889

[pastor@umcSanctuary.org](mailto:pastor@umcSanctuary.org) [www.umcSanctuary.org](http://www.umcSanctuary.org)