

For Broadcast: 24th May 2020

ARE YOU AFRAID?

Round The Table

- Noel:** Sigmund Freud said that all fear is the fear of death and I'm guessing in the story of your reluctance to get on the plane to Indonesia, it's fear of death, fear of leaving your family and your loved ones behind. I'm sure that it's there, but some of our fears are entirely irrational. There's not always a clear connection, I don't think, between the fear of death and the things that we're frightened of.
- Celia:** I'm frightened of moths. I've got to admit, I hate the feeling and the thought of them fluttering at me and getting stuck in my hair. It's just horrible. I just hate that feeling.
- Noel:** Yeah, there's not much chance of being killed by a moth but-
- Richard:** It's probably not a fear you hold, Noel.
- Noel:** No, I never worry about them getting in my hair.
- Celia:** I know it's an irrational fear because I know they're not going to necessarily hurt me, but it's just, I can't go to sleep with a moth in the room.
- Richard:** So how do you cope with fear?
- Noel:** Well, how did you get on the plane to go to Indonesia? Whether it's something irrational or whether it's something you think because of all these terrorist attacks, you've still got to do the same things. What did you do?
- Richard:** It's a leap of faith in a way. I was really trusting the people who were controlling that plane and trusting the whole system and processes that, that plane was going to get me to Indonesia and that I was going to be safe in Indonesia. Even when everything adds up logically, there's still an act of faith in that I'm going to trust this system to work.
- Noel:** So your coping strategy is to trust the processes, trust the systems?
- Richard:** I suppose so, yeah, and then trusting the people involved in it. Ultimately for me as Christian, it's faith in God, trusting Him that He will actually guide me through this whole journey.
- Celia:** Yeah, you know that even if you were to die, because you're a Christian, you know that would be okay too.
- Noel:** Well, you can say that, but! I think you both know, I had a major cancer diagnosis a couple of years ago, and I know as a Christian person about Jesus' promise of eternal life. I know his promise that "I will be with you." When my first wife was dying of cancer, we experienced that, but when I was diagnosed, the fear still came. It's not as though faith eliminates the fear, but there's a sense in which the fear doesn't become the dominating force in your life, but the thing in which and through which you exercise faith.

- Celia:** The faith helps you cope with your fear or the faith gives you a way through your fear or past your fear?
- Noel:** For me, I wouldn't even say it was a conscious coping thing. It wasn't a coping strategy like, "I have faith in Jesus and Richard's got a lucky rabbit's foot." It was just the surety of having experienced Jesus' presence in the first incident of my wife's death and having seen what he's written and spoken about and said in the scriptures to be true for us. "I will be with you and I will never leave you or forsake you."
- I knew it was something outside of me that would keep me, that even if my cancer diagnosis had been terminal which ... touch wood at the moment ... it isn't, that I would still have someone who would be with me, someone who would walk me through this process of the unknown stuff. Terrifying though, I would naturally find it.
- Richard:** How do you know that it's more real than a rabbit's foot or something?
- Noel:** For me, it's because this is not a self-invented thing. I'm not finding something out of my own imagination based on some superstition that I'm putting my faith in. There's the whole witness of the church and the whole witness of the scriptures and the personal presence of Christ, which I know to be stronger than my fears and more present than my next breath. I'm not saying that because of that, I don't have fear. I'm saying that you live with that fear in a different way because of that faith.
- Richard:** That's how I understand it too in a way, in that Jesus is real, He really did exist. He came into this world and promises to be with us through the fears. I still felt afraid going on that plane even though I trusted in God to look after me.
- Celia:** So you don't get rid of the fear. It's maybe that sometimes the fear perhaps points us to that faith.
- Noel:** I suppose the rabbit's foot is a superstition helping us cope with fear, but what I've just been talking about in my experience and what you've just been alluding to is not a superstitious response to fear, but a faith response to fear.
- Celia:** What you're saying there is that the fear doesn't control you. You let your faith control the fear.
- Noel:** Yes, that's a good way of putting it. It doesn't remove the fear, but it stops the fear imprisoning me. Faith is the means by which fear is kept in its place.

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