

Splash Canyon VBS

Grace, mercy, and peace be to you from God our Father and our Lord and Savior, Jesus Christ.

This morning as we celebrate the VBS program that was before us last week, we turn our attention to the reading that we had from the book of Acts, “Since they had been without food for a long time, Paul stood up among them and said, “Men, you should have listened to me and not have set sail from Crete and incurred this injury and loss. Yet now I urge you to take heart, for there will be no loss of life among you, but only of the ship. For this very night there stood before me an angel of the God to whom I belong and whom I worship, and he said, ‘Do not be afraid, Paul; you must stand before Caesar. And behold, God has granted you all those who sail with you.’ So take heart, men, for I have faith in God that it will be exactly as I have been told. But we must run aground on some island.”

“I told you so.” Isn’t that something that we all just love to hear? It’s especially great when the person saying it is someone that we would consider ourselves to be superior to. But that is what we find in our text here. You see, it’s easy for us to hear these words from Paul and think of the great writer, the bold traveler, the brave evangelist, or the incredible thinker. But that is not who stood before the people on that ship so long ago.

No, this was Paul the prisoner. This was the man who had been arrested in Jerusalem after being nearly beaten to death by the crowd. This is the Paul who had caused such an uproar again and again that there were men plotting to murder him and the Sanhedrin had almost torn itself apart fighting about him. This Paul is by no means the success or winner that he is remembered as today. This is the Paul that has forced a centurion to take him to Rome so that he could plead his case for Christianity before Caesar. But he hadn’t gotten there yet. He was merely a

headache, a nuisance, and someone who makes everything far more complicated than it needs to be. He told the centurion before they left that they should not undertake this voyage because it was getting to be the time of year when travel was more dangerous. But they didn't listen. So now they have been adrift and battered by a storm for the better part of a week and what does Paul have to offer them? "I told you so."

How often do you think that God might tell us something similar when we find ourselves in trouble of our own making? He tells us what he desires marriage to be and we make a mockery of it by engaging in all kinds of unhealthy relationships and walking into unhelpful situations. He tells us that we should treat each other with love, but we chose to tear down others and do all that we can to try to one-up the people around us. We sabotage relationships, sometimes without even meaning to because we don't know how to be in a good relationship. God

tells us that families should be a place of love, care, and teaching but far too often our families become places of great strife, discontent, and anger. And through it all, God shakes his head at us telling us, “I told you so.”

And “I told you so” is just as helpful today as it was in the first century. That is to say; it’s not! In fact, we see Paul thwarting the attempt of some of the sailors to escape on the secondary boat. The people were so stressed and afraid that they didn’t even have a meal for fourteen days! Some of us can easily imagine that kind of stress because we’ve been through it. Or we can at least find some commonality with the amount of fear that must have been onboard the ship with Paul.

And that’s part of the problem, isn’t it? We can be told the answers to the questions of the universe, but it doesn’t make life any less scary does it? We can know that an unknown situation will work out for us before we ever go into it, but it doesn’t

change the fact that we have a knot in the pit of our stomachs.

We can be given every word of encouragement and be told the numbers every time before we go in for a surgery, but it never makes it less frightening. We can spend hours studying and be sure that we are going to pass a test, but our hearts beat a little faster when it's handed out.

These and many more things in life give us reason to fear. The men on the ship feared for their lives, which is a much greater kind of fear than most of us experience regularly. Much has been said about how God tells us in Scripture to not be afraid. When Mary is greeted by the angel for the annunciation, she is told to not be afraid. When the disciples were on a boat and it was beginning to fill with water because of a storm, Jesus tells them to not be afraid. When John sees the resurrected and glorified Jesus on Patmos, he is told to not be afraid.

The truth is that if we are truly paying attention and accurately measuring the things that we face in this life, we would all be crippled by fear on a daily basis. Anxiety would be the default of the human being. The list of problems and calamities that can befall us each and every day is staggering! But yet we have one who faced that which is far more awful than anything that we will ever have to face.

Our Lord Jesus Christ allowed himself to become the sacrifice for the sins of all people. He was hung upon the cross and faced the full and unbridled wrath of the Father. He felt not just fear, but abandonment. He hung on the cross, bloody, beaten, and defeated for your sake and mine. He faced down sin, death, and the devil so that you and I don't have to. Our forgiveness is found only in Christ and what he has done for us at the cross.

This week in our VBS program, we focused on the many promises of God. We talked about how God is with us, how he gives us hope, and many other things. And all of this is because we hold fast to the promises of faith. Through faith in Christ, the salvation won for us by Jesus has been secured. Through faith in Christ, your sins and my sins are forgiven. Through faith in Christ, we have hope and strength to face that world that is uncertain and frightening.

These are the promises of God. These are the promises that have been made to you through faith. No one can take these promises from us. These are our promises, they are our birthright. And though these promises of life and salvation give us strength to pass through these days of darkness and sorrow, they don't necessarily change the darkness or sorrow around us. We still see much evil and pain in our lives and in our world.

But when we suffer, we have one to turn to. We turn always again and again to our Lord Jesus Christ who has promised to be with us to the very end of the age. We turn to our Lord who has promised to give us life that no one can take away. We turn to Christ who gives us an equal share in his victory over sin, death, and the devil.

And so when we are full of fear, when we are on the verge of despair, or when we think that we cannot go on, our Lord comes to us again and again in his Word and Sacraments telling us, “I told you so.” He reaffirms the love that he has for us. He calls us back to the comfort of the Gospel. He gladly, joyfully, and generously forgives our sins again and again. And when we ask him why, he simply replies with, “I told you so.” His promises are worth us trusting because he is faithful and he will keep his promises that he makes to us, even in spite of our own sin. Truly, he forgives us and makes us into something new, his

new people brought to life by his own Spirit. Just as he told us.

Amen.

Now, may the peace that surpasses all understanding keep
your hearts and minds in Christ Jesus our Lord to life
everlasting. Amen.