

Daily Devotional Guide

Monday – Today read Romans 8:18-23. These verses remind us that the trouble we face in this life is temporary. When we face trouble of any kind, we do “groan” and “long” for life as it should be. This is the Holy Spirit in us giving testimony to the great day when the Kingdom of God is fully established and trouble will be no more. Trouble will not last forever, but God will. Take comfort in that today.

Tuesday - Read Romans 8:26-27. This text brings great encouragement to us when we face trouble. First, the implication is that our first response to trouble is prayer. There is power in prayer. Second, the Holy Spirit understands us and our circumstances and is there to help us pray for what we need. Are you feeling overwhelmed? Try prayer today. The Spirit is there to help.

Wednesday – Read Romans 8:28. This is perhaps the most important verse we can meditate on when we face trouble in life. The promise given here is that pain and trouble are never the will of God, but God can and will produce good from trouble. We see this throughout scripture – God taking a bad situation and using it for good. This is what Paul means later in this text when he says we are “more than conquerors” (Romans 8:37). With God’s help, we not only can cope with trouble but we can turn our trouble into triumph.

Thursday – Read Romans 8:31-35. Whatever trouble you face today, know that you do not face it alone. God is with you every step of the way, willing to offer strength and guidance if you will allow it. God is FOR you, not against you. Reflect on this truth today.

Friday – Read Romans 8:37-39. Paul puts an exclamation point on this powerful chapter in Romans by reminding us that there is no power in the universe strong enough to separate us from the love and power of God. Not even death can separate us from God. The battle has been won. God is the victor. You can face trouble unafraid.



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~ When Trouble Finds You ~ Here Comes Trouble - What Now?

Sunday, March 13, 2011

Sermon by: Dr. Charley Reeb, Senior Pastor

Scripture Lesson: Mark 4: 35-41

(Some footage of the Tsunami hitting Japan was shown on the screen.)

What if that had been your home washing away in the Tsunami? What if that had been you driving on the road when the Tsunami hit? What would have been your thoughts? “I wish I had invested more in my 401K?” “I wish I had a bigger salary?” “I wish I had a better car?” Or perhaps your thoughts would have been, “I wish I had done better things with my life.” Or maybe “I just want to survive and get through this!”

Are you prepared to face the storms of life? Are you ready when trouble finds you? The time to prepare is before the storms hit. When the siren sounds, it is too late to get prepared. Are you prepared today? As bad as a Tsunami is, we can prepare ahead of time for them because we have the technology that can track them. But life does not work that way. We have yet to find technology that can track our personal problems and tell us when and how a crisis is going to hit us. Most storms in life are unpredictable, so we must be prepared at all times.

The disciples understood the unpredictable nature of life. They had met Jesus from Nazareth. He was a lot different from the other teachers roaming around. He touched them in a place that had never been touched before. He spoke in a way that no one ever spoke. They gave up everything to follow him.

One day the disciples surrounded Jesus on the shore of the Sea of Galilee. He was teaching

about little mustard seeds growing into something huge. Soon, evening came and Jesus wanted to ride a boat to the other side. Four of the disciples were professional fishermen and they were more than happy to oblige. They pushed off into the sunset. It had been a good day...well, almost. Before they knew what hit them, a windstorm arose and tossed their boat around like a toy. It scared the living daylights out of the disciples.

It is not uncommon for windstorms to develop suddenly on the Sea of Galilee. The combination of the elements in and around the Sea of Galilee allow for sudden windstorms. Life also allows for sudden storms. Trouble has a way of sneaking up on you.

Story one: It was Friday afternoon, and I had just returned from playing a great tennis match. I had made plans earlier that day to go out with my friends from high school. On my way up to my room my Mom and Dad called me into their bedroom. I walked in and told him that whatever they needed to tell me it needed to be quick. I was running late. My Dad sat in a chair next to his bed taking off his shoes. My Mom stood beside him. My Dad looked up at me and said, “I just got back from the doctor. I have cancer.” The windstorm had come.

Story two: They threw a retirement party for him. They roasted him and presented him with all these awards. He had been with the company for a long time. His proud wife was there by his side. They asked what he was going to do in his retirement. “Travel,” he said. The couple went on

to tell about all the trips they had planned. They went home a proud and happy couple. The next day his wife collapsed and died. The windstorm had come.

Story three: They were a good family. They invested their money well. Took care of themselves and their kids. Everyone looked up to them. One day she called him at work. "Have you checked the news?" she asked. "We have lost it all!" You see, they invested with a guy named Madoff.

Trouble rarely announces itself before it comes. Trouble hardly ever says, "Here I come! Get ready!" We wish it would. At least we could prepare for it, or better yet, we could avoid it altogether. But life doesn't work that way. In fact, you are one of three people today – you are coming out of a storm, you are in the middle of a storm, or you about to go into a storm. That's life. And don't think that just because you are a Christian that you will escape the storms of life. My Bible does not tell me this. Christians are not immune to the storms of life. Sin runs amuck in our world and bad things happen to all of us. We live in a broken world.

Since storms are a fact of life, our lives are defined by how we respond to storms. Think about it. Addicts are defined by their ability to numb themselves to the storms. Criminals act out destructively to the storms. Atheists blame the absence of God for the storms. Chronic victims exploit the storms to avoid responsibility. Look at most unhealthy people and you will see lives which have been defined by unhealthy responses to trouble. M. Scott Peck mentions in his groundbreaking book "The Road Less Traveled" that most mental illness has one cause: the inability to cope with the pain and truth of life.

At the bottom of all unhealthy responses to the storms of life is one bad word. This word is the enemy to all that brings life, joy, peace, and hope. The word is "panic." Panic is the feeling of being unprepared for the storm. Panic is a feeling of being out of control. Panic is grabbing anything that makes you feel like you are in control, even if it is unhealthy.

In our text for today the disciples panicked. The storm was knocking them around. They crawled to the stern of the boat to find Jesus asleep!

They screamed, "Don't you care what is happening to us!"

Sound familiar? Oh, you may have come to church today all put together on the outside, but inside you may be coming apart. Maybe your business is failing. Maybe your marriage is on the rocks. Maybe you're living between doctor appointments. Whatever it is, it is taking all the self-control you have not to stand up right where you are and scream, "Lord, don't you care what happens to me? Don't you care? Are you listening?" And you read the text for today and you see that Jesus is asleep! You say, "See! The Lord is asleep! He's asleep to me and this world. He doesn't care. He is an absentee landlord!"

Why is Jesus asleep on the boat? This is the big question of the text. Jesus is asleep because the Lord never panics. Why? The Lord is in control. The Lord has got the whole world in his hands. Jesus was giving us a model for how to face trouble. If we knew the heavenly Father the way Jesus knew the heavenly Father we would not panic, either. Jesus got up and calmed the raging tempest.

Jesus can do the same for you. It doesn't matter what you have brought to church today. It doesn't matter what you are worried about. It doesn't matter how heavy your burden is. Jesus can give you peace in the midst of the storm. He can calm the tempest in your heart. He really can. All it requires of you is one thing.

I know people who have this one thing. I walked into a hospital room and saw a lady who had it. She was in her 40's dying of breast cancer. Her friends were throwing her a birthday party. There was cake beside her hospital bed and she had a pink party hat on her head. They were playing music and dancing around her bed. I thought, "This is not appropriate." It seemed strange until I saw her face. She had it. She was prepared.

My Dad had it. I would see it when he prayed at the dinner table. I would open one eye and watch him. He had it. He was prepared. John Wesley had it. It is what made all the difference to his ministry. He found it at Aldersgate. He was prepared. Oh, Abraham had it. Noah had it. Moses had it. David had it. All of them were prepared. Many of you have it. I see it. It really does make a difference. You know what it is? It is

in the text. Faith.

You see, Christians are not perfect. Christians are not in control. Christians don't have all the answers. Christians are not better than other people. Christians are those who have learned that Jesus can be trusted! Jesus can be trusted to give peace in the midst of the storm. Jesus can be trusted to take what is evil and transform into something good. Jesus can be trusted to never leave you. Jesus can be trusted to receive you when you die. Jesus can be trusted!

If we don't believe this, we might as well be on the golf course today or at the beach. If we don't believe this then we are just playing church. The church is not some charity organization. The church is not some glorified non-profit. The church is a body of people that believe that Jesus can be trusted. Do you believe that?

When you have this kind of faith, you can face any storm. You can be prepared for all kinds of trouble. This is not some preacher telling you this. This is backed by solid research. Journalist Sarah Jennings sought to find the reason why some people can thrive in the midst of trouble and others can't. You know what she found to be the number one reason why some people thrive in crisis? Their faith in God! She found that people who survive and thrive in the midst of trouble hold to two certain beliefs: God will sustain them in the midst of trouble and God will transform their trouble into something good, positive, and useful (*The Survivors Club: Finding Faith to Carry You Through Disaster*, Sarah Jennings, Crosswalk.com, Family Editor).

It takes time to develop an abiding faith in Christ. You can't take a crash course in spirituality. This is why we focus on regular worship attendance, Bible study, prayer, and other spiritual disciplines. We do it so that when crisis hits your life, you are prepared. We keep emphasizing good spiritual habits so that your life is built on a solid foundation, and you are not at mercy of the shallow winds of culture. Sometimes complete strangers will come to see me. They tell me they never had time for God or the church, but they are in trouble and they need my help. I am there for them because I see in their eyes that they realize that their lives have been built on sand. And they want me to give them an abiding faith in Christ in 15 minutes!

Jesus said it quite clearly in Matthew 7:24-27: "Therefore everyone who hears these words of mine and puts them into practice is like a wise man who built his house on the rock. The rain came down, the streams rose, and the winds blew and beat against that house; yet it did not fall, because it had its foundation on the rock. But everyone who hears these words of mine and does not put them into practice is like a foolish man who built his house on sand. The rain came down, the streams rose, and the winds blew and beat against that house, and it fell with a great crash" (NIV)

What kind of foundation is your life built on? Are you prepared for the storms of life? For when the Tsunami comes, you will need more than an article you read in a magazine. You will need more than a self-help book you have underlined. You will need more than an episode from Oprah. You will need Jesus. He is the only sure foundation.

Give your life to Jesus today. Pray, "Lord Jesus, I give my life and my troubles over to you. Forgive me of my sins and fill me with your Holy Spirit. Give me the courage and strength to face the storms of my life." Amen.