

Sunday, June 24, 2018

2 Corinthians 6: 1-13

Mark 4:35-41

Today is the Day of Salvation

Chippie the parakeet had a very horrible, terrible awful day. His owners still don't hear him sing anymore. The parakeet never saw it coming. One second he was peacefully perched in his cage. The next he was sucked in, washed up, and blown over.

The problems began when Chippie's owner decided to clean Chippie's cage with a vacuum cleaner. She removed the attachment from the end of the hose and stuck it in the cage. The phone rang, and she turned to pick it up. She'd barely said "hello" when "ssssopp!" Chippie got sucked in! The bird's owner gasped, put down the phone, turned off the vacuum cleaner, and opened the bag not sure of what she would find. But there was Chippie - still alive, but stunned.

Since the bird was covered with dust, hair and all the stuff you find in a dust bag, she grabbed him and raced to the bathroom, turned on the tap, and held Chippie under the running water. Then, realizing that Chippie was soaked and shivering, she did what any compassionate bird owner would do, she reached for the hair dryer and blasted the pet with hot air.

Poor Chippie never knew what hit him. But he was breathing and after the cage was completely cleaned and prepared, Chippie was put back in on his perch.

A few days after the trauma, a friend who had heard about Chippie's troubles contacted his owner to see how the bird was recovering. "Well," she replied, "Chippie doesn't sing much anymore - he just sits and stares." Who can blame him? Sucked in, washed up, and blown over . . . That's enough to steal the song from the stoutest heart. One can only imagine the fear that played in Chippie's heart that day—was this the end of his life—all he did was sing, eat and then sing some more? Should he have been afraid?

Things happen in our lives that come along unexpectedly and we end up feeling a bit like Chippie - sucked in, washed up, and blown over - the song stolen from the stoutest of hearts. But unlike Chippie we can sing again and we can live a new life if we have faith in the One who made us and calls us to follow His Son, Jesus.

Jesus was exhausted after teaching from the boat for most of the day. He wanted to rest and get away from the crowds. He asked his disciples to take him across the lake. Other boats crossed with them. Jesus lay down in the back of the boat and fell asleep. Suddenly a furious

squall, winds came up on the lake and the waves broke over the boat so that it was nearly swamped. Jesus was sleeping and did not hear a thing. The disciples went to him, woke him up and said, "Teacher, don't you care if we drown?" But Jesus did not answer the question at all. He got up, stretched a little, put out his hand and said to the wind and waves, "Quiet! Be still!" Then the wind died down and it was calm again. The question he then asked had nothing to do with the storm and waves, but with the emotions that they were experiencing. Why are you so afraid? Do you still have no faith? Fearful, unfaithful? Is this what Jesus saw in the disciples?

They then became terrified and asked each other- Who is this? Even the wind and the waves obey him? They were just not sure of this Teacher, Jesus.

But we do know who Jesus is. We know because we believe, we have faith and we trust Jesus with our lives, right? Jesus is the one who came into the world so that we need not be afraid of death, close calls, or any of the storms or trials in our lives. Whenever the normal day to day routine is challenged, there could be uncertain moments where fear enters, where being 'lost' is normal, where not knowing leads us to questioning both what we know and what we believe. These storms are often because of influences and circumstances outside of ourselves. A person we love becomes sick or dies, an accident occurs, or a medical condition is diagnosed... all these may be considered storms. Yet Jesus asked the disciples two things? Why are you afraid? Do you still have no faith? And he could have added two words to these questions? Why are you afraid OF ME? Do you still have no faith IN ME?

Paul was a faithful man for after Jesus challenged him while he had been persecuting Christians, his life was forever changed. Paul corresponds with the church family at Corinth and urges them not to just accept God's grace in vain, but to truly believe what Paul taught them. For when he was with them, many believed in God and shared with God their sins, and received forgiveness. But in reading ch 6 of Paul's second letter, it still sounds like they don't get it. What were they afraid? Did they still have faith in Jesus? Paul writes, now is the time of God's favour, now is the day of salvation. But what does this mean in light of our own fears, and uncertainty of having faith today?

In the Basis of union of the UCC, Article X we read the following: *Of Faith and Repentance.* We believe that faith in Christ is a saving grace whereby we receive Him, trust in Him, and rest upon Him alone for salvation as He is offered to us in the Gospel, and that this saving faith is always accompanied by repentance, wherein we confess and forsake our sins with full purpose of and endeavour after a new obedience to God.

Our full purpose is to live for God but there are many people who have not turned to Christ for help, They are afraid to do so because they are unsure of who Jesus is and can be in their lives, they don't want to admit their sin or don't see their need for salvation. And it is this salvation, or saving grace that Jesus offers. Only God can remove sin and deliver us from death but we need to have faith in Jesus. We have heard and shared the story of Jesus' death and resurrection. We must now believe that is fully trust Jesus to lead and guide our lives. This means refocusing our life to follow him but to also call on him when we are praising him, or seeking help for others and for ourselves.

The disciples were genuinely afraid and thought they would drown. If they had really believed they knew who he was and that he was God's son, when they saw Jesus sleeping they should have calmed down and left him to rest, trusting that all would be fine. Jesus was not worried about drowning so why were they? We too need not be afraid of outside challenges which we face. Yes we will have people close to us cause us to feel many emotions—laughter, sadness, sorrow, excitement, but no matter what if we truly believe that Jesus is within us and we have received forgiveness, we know our salvation is secure, That is when we realize and know in heart and minds that we belong to Jesus, we should not be afraid.

When Jesus walked the earth, there were many fears, uncertainties and life was shortened because of unsanitary conditions disease, oppression and just a tough existence. And the people did not know what was to occur. They thought that the kingdom of God was to occur in their lifetime—we are still waiting. But in the meantime we be ready, we can know Jesus as Saviour, and we can open our hearts to receive His Spirit. We read in John 3:16 tells us, "For God so loved the world that he gave his one and only Son, that whoever believes in him shall not perish but have eternal life." Salvation is gained by faith by receiving Jesus as Saviour and by fully trusting Jesus alone. It is not by reciting a prayer but praying throughout one's life, it is not by an act of caring for others, it is by trusting Jesus to enable you to do these tasks without fear, and knowing that He will be with you no matter what you face—wind, rain, sleet, vacuum cleaners, water taps or hair dryers.. And after the situation is resolved and a new normal begins, you can turn to Jesus and sing His praises.

Let us pray and sing together: "Don't be Afraid" 90 MV