

7/29/2018

“Shipwrecked”

Scripture: Acts 27:13 - 44

Theme: God is with us through the storms of life. He saves us in life’s most difficult and disastrous times.

Rather than follow the lectionary and related theme from our previous weeks, which essentially tells the same story from John’s account of the gospel, I’ve decided to use the theme from this year’s Vacation Bible School. With such a wonderful setup surrounding us, I could hardly resist. Besides, it’s a great theme -- Shipwrecked!

I did, however, decide to use a bible story which came to mind, rather than the ones used for VBS. The story is from the Book of Acts, which tells of the Apostle Paul on his way by sea to be tried before Caesar in Rome.

Listen as I share it with you . . . And following today’s message, we’ll have a time for you to share your own story of being blown off course in the storms of life, or shipwrecked in some way, and tell us how God was with you or how Jesus rescued you.

Now, Paul was apparently not treated too harshly, perhaps, because he was a Roman citizen. After the first day’s voyage up the coast of Palestine, he was allowed to go to the house of friends after they ported in Sidon, some 50 or 60 miles north of Galilee.

They continued along the east and north of the island of Cyprus, changing boats in the harbor of Myra in the province of Lycia (part of modern day Turkey). After facing rough waters due to the changing seasons, Paul warned them not to sail on. But, they did anyway, because the harbor was unsuitable to winter in.

Paul then goes from being the victim to the victor in a sense, as the ship is blown off course by the hurricane winds of a northeaster – yes, they have them in the Mediterranean, too!

Listen to how Luke describes it (Acts 27:13- 44) . . . (NIV and NIRV)

When a gentle south wind began to blow, they saw their opportunity; so they weighed anchor and sailed along the shore of Crete. Before very long, a wind of hurricane force, called the Northeaster, swept down from the island. The ship was caught by the storm and could not head into the wind; so we gave way to it and were driven along. As we passed to the calmer side of a small island called Cauda, we were hardly able to make the lifeboat secure, so the men hoisted it aboard. Then they passed ropes under the ship itself to hold it together.

Because they were afraid they would run aground on the sandbars of Syrtis, they lowered the sea anchor and let the ship be driven along. We took such a violent battering from the storm that the next day they began to throw the cargo overboard.

On the third day, they threw the ship's tackle overboard with their own hands. And when neither sun nor stars appeared for many days and the storm continued raging, we finally gave up all hope of being saved.

After they had gone a long time without food, Paul stood up before them and said: "Men, you should have taken my advice not to sail from Crete; then you would have spared yourselves this damage and loss. But now I urge you to keep up your courage, because not one of you will be lost; only the ship will be destroyed. Last night an angel of the God to whom I belong and whom I serve stood beside me and said, 'Do not be afraid, Paul. You must stand trial before Caesar; and God has graciously given you the lives of all who sail with you.' So keep up your courage, men, for I have faith in God that it will happen just as he told me. Nevertheless, we must run aground on some island."

The Shipwreck

On the fourteenth night we were still being driven across the Adriatic Sea, when about midnight the sailors sensed they were approaching land. They took soundings and found that the water was a hundred and twenty feet deep. A short time later they took soundings again and found it was ninety feet deep. Fearing that we would be dashed against the rocks, they dropped four anchors from the stern and prayed for daylight.

In an attempt to escape from the ship, the sailors let the lifeboat down into the sea, pretending they were going to lower some anchors from the bow. Then Paul said to the centurion and the soldiers, "Unless these men stay with the ship, you cannot be saved." So the soldiers cut the ropes that held the lifeboat and let it drift away.

Just before dawn Paul urged them all to eat. "For the last fourteen days," he said, "you have been in constant suspense and have gone without food—you haven't eaten anything. Now I urge you to take some food. You need it to survive. Not one of you will lose a single hair from his head."

After he said this, he took some bread and gave thanks to God in front of them all. Then he broke it and began to eat. They were all encouraged and ate some food themselves. Altogether there were 276 of us on board. When they had eaten as much as they wanted, they lightened the ship by throwing the grain into the sea.

When daylight came, they did not recognize the land, but they saw a bay with a sandy beach, where they decided to run the ship aground if they could. Cutting loose the anchors, they left them in the sea and at the same time untied the ropes that held the rudders. Then they hoisted the foresail to the wind and made for the beach. But the ship struck a sandbar and ran aground. The bow stuck fast and would not move, and the stern was broken to pieces by the pounding of the surf.

The soldiers planned to kill the prisoners to prevent any of them from swimming away and escaping. But the centurion wanted to spare Paul's life and kept them from carrying out their

plan. He ordered those who could swim to jump overboard first and get to land. The rest were to get there on planks or on other pieces of the ship. In this way everyone reached land safely.

Wow! What a dramatic story that Luke preserved with great detail. Yes, God was with Paul and Luke through this great storm of more than one kind. And, **God is with us through the storms of life. He saves us in life's most difficult and disastrous times.**

Jesus comes to rescue us from the storms of our own making, as well as those from other circumstances. At times God even sends an angel or special messenger to bring us assurance and encouragement.

I know from personal experience that we too, may find ourselves tossed or challenged by life's circumstances. But, the good news is that **Christ has made the way! The Holy Spirit is ever with us in this life!** There is grace, peace, joy and blessings now and in the life to come.

Paul was able to persevere in faith, because he knew God had a purpose for his life.

Maybe, you have a story to share of being caught in a storm, or even shipwrecked in a way. I invite you to share it with us now. . .

May God's love watch over and guide you, protect and deliver you in the storms and shipwrecks of your life. Amen.

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Questions for Reflection:

1. **When have you felt caught in a "nor'easter", driven along by the wind?**

2. **How did you feel and respond to the circumstances? What did you learn from the experience?**

3. **What is the greatest challenge you or a loved is facing at present?**

4. **How can Paul's example, and the principles you've learned from his experience, help you and others?**
