

INTRODUCTION

It’s been a wonderful but tiring week as we completed our Share the Joy dedication services. I’m excited because now we can move on and begin the work of the ministry God has given us. As we begin our 47th year as a congregation, I am certain the best is yet to come!

We are still getting used to this building, and it’s obvious since we can all see everything better, distractions are multiplied. One time a pastor commented to a lady, “I notice that your husband stands and walks out quite often during the sermon, is everything okay?” The lady replied, “Oh, it’s nothing—he’s been walking in his sleep for years!”

Last week we studied how Jesus said the devil is actively trying to steal the Word of God from your ears and hearts—he does it by distractions. So let me ask that you do your part to avoid being a distraction. Please don’t get up and leave during the service unless it’s absolutely necessary. These doors make a loud “click” that can be heard all over the room when they are shut so if you must leave, please be as quiet as possible.

I heard a story about a bunch of guys in the locker room of a health club. A cell phone lying on a bench rang and a man answered it. A female voice asked, “Honey, are you still at the health club?” The man replied, “I sure am.” She said, “well, I’m here at the boutique and they have their mink coats on sale and the one I’ve been dying to have is marked down to only \$9,000. What do you think?” He says, “Go ahead, that sounds like a good price to me.” She said, “Thanks, darling. By the way, I passed by that gorgeous home we have always loved and it’s for sale. I called the realtor and she said they are asking \$600,000 for it. What would you think if I signed a contract for it before someone else buys it?” He says, “Sounds good to me—go for it.” She said, “Great! Talk to you later.” After the man pushed the end button on the phone, he held it up and said, “Does anybody know whose cell phone this is?” So, as a reminder, please turn off your cell phones and pagers or put them in the silent mode.

Last week, Jesus gave the lesson, a parable, about how well we hear the Word of God. Like every good teacher, He gave a test after the lesson. Today, we are going to look at three brief sections of scripture under the title of “Jesus is All You Need.” From the cradle to the grave, each of us is a bundle of needs. Today we are going to look at three of these needs and see how Jesus can meet them. We’ll look at the first two quickly and then spend a little more time on the third.

First, let’s read Luke 8:15-18:

No one lights a lamp and hides it in a jar or put it under a bed. Instead, he puts it on a stand, so that those who come in can see the light. For there is nothing hidden that will not be disclosed, and nothing concealed that will not be known or brought out into the open. Therefore consider carefully how you listen. Whoever has will be given more; whoever does not have, even what he thinks he has will be taken from him.

I. FOR YOUR CONFUSION JESUS OFFERS TRUTH (16-18)

Remember, Jesus has just finished the parable about how our attitude toward hearing the Word of God can be like seed thrown on hard ground, shallow ground, ground with weeds and thorns, or on good soil.

Today, millions of people are searching for truth. If I could sit down face to face with you and look you in the eye and ask you the question, “What is your source of truth?” How would you respond? Don’t give me some religious answer you think I want to hear. Everyone in this room has some basis, some source of truth. Whether or not you recognize it, you are using some source to determine what is right and wrong and good and bad for you. It may be your own opinion, “This is what I think.” It may be someone else’s opinion, “This is what Dr. so-and-so says.”

A number of years ago, I made a conscious decision that the basis for truth in my life would be the Word of God. In the Bible, darkness is often used to represent evil or error and light is used to represent goodness and truth. Jesus said truth must be displayed; it can’t be hidden. You can’t hide anything from God and He isn’t hiding anything from you. That’s why Jesus said it is very important to consider *how* you listen to God’s Word. If you listen skeptically, saying, “Well, I don’t really know if I believe that or not,” you are placing a light under the bed or in a clay jar.

Look at verse 18 again. This could almost be a riddle. “What is it that when you have it you’ll be given more, and what you think you have but don’t even that will be taken from you?” It almost seems unfair. If a person has a lot of money, does it seem right they get a lot more and that person who only has a little will have what he has taken away? Jesus wasn’t talking about money. Does it seem fair the person who has a lot of food should get more, while that person who only has a little food has it taken away? Jesus wasn’t talking about food Here’s the principle:

God’s truth: Use it (obey) or lose it!

God gives every person a measure of spiritual truth. If you act upon and obey the truth you have, God will give you more. But if you reject the truth God gives you, you will soon find even that truth is long gone from your mind and heart.

You can’t just take God’s truth and put it in your pocket and save it for a rainy day; you must act on it immediately. It’s like a man walking toward the light. If he keeps walking toward the light, it keeps getting brighter and brighter. But if a man turns his back on the light and walks away, even that light becomes dimmer and dimmer. Are you confused and searching for truth? Jesus said, “I am the way, I and I am the truth, and I am the light.” (John 14:6) Jesus not only teaches the truth—He *is* the truth.

Let’s look at the second episode in Luke 8:19-21:

Now Jesus’ mother and brothers came to see him, but they were not able to get near him because of the crowd. Someone told him, “your mother and brothers are standing outside, wanting to see you” He replied, “My mother and brothers are those who hear God’s word and put it into practice.”

II. FOR YOUR ISOLATION JESUS OFFERS A FAMILY (19-21)

Today is Mother’s Day and it is fortuitous we are studying an occasion where Jesus is approached by His mother and her other children. These siblings could be called half-brothers since they had the same mother as Jesus but they had different daddies. Joseph had been the father of Mary’s other children, and Jesus had the Lord God as His father.

On the surface, it would appear Jesus is being unkind or uncaring toward his biological family. It’s important to note that during the initial stages of Jesus’ ministry, his family thought he was a little crazy. Let’s face it, what if your 30-year-old brother left his good job as a carpenter and went about claiming to be the Messiah? Mark mentions this family attitude in Mark 3:20-21:

Then Jesus entered a house, and again a crowd gathered, so that he and his disciples were not even able to eat. When his family heard about this, they went to take charge of him, for they said, “He is out of his mind.”

Later, His family began to believe He really was the Son of God. His half-brother James became the leader of the church in Jerusalem and wrote the book of James. Another half brother, Jude, wrote the short book of Jude, nestled just before Revelation. Jesus always loved and honored His mother. She was at the cross where Jesus asked John to take care of her. After the resurrection, Mary is mentioned being with the disciples who were praying in the upper room on the day of Pentecost; then she is never mentioned again in the New Testament.

If you read this passage and only hear Jesus gently rebuffing His biological family, you miss the point. Jesus is using the presence of His natural family to teach us that there is another family, brothers and sisters who are bound together by a stronger bond than bloodlines and family ties. There is a much larger family in which you and I can find acceptance.

Some people claim *every* resident of planet earth belongs to this one big happy family of mankind. While it’s true we are all neighbors on this planet, there is *not* one big family of humanity. Notice Jesus gave a narrow definition of just *who* qualified to be His brother or mother: “Those who hear God’s Word and put it into practice.” Obviously, that doesn’t even include everyone in this county, much less everyone in this world. However, if you are one of those who, as Jesus said, have heard God’s Word and you are living by it, you are part of the family of God.

Now, it’s possible for you to have two families, your biological family and your spiritual family. Sadly, the term “one big happy family” doesn’t apply to many biological families. Take Mother’s Day for instance. For many of you today is a happy day, because you’ll be able to express to your mom how much you love her. For others of us, our mothers are in heaven, and today is a sad reminder of those days when we could call her or hug her. Still for others, it’s a tough day because you may be estranged from your mother. You see, human families are far from perfect and there are all kinds of pain that come from your family. Biological families often cause us tremendous pain as well as great pride.

Jesus is teaching us the family of God can be everything for you your biological family should be—and much more. Even for people who live in families there is the problem of isolation and loneliness. The Beatles were right when they sang, “Ah, look at all the lonely people.” You don’t have to be alone to be lonely. Someone once said a city is a place where thousands of people can be lonely together.

People in our culture are trying desperately to connect. That’s why they carry mobile phones and pagers. They spend hours online trying to fill the emptiness of loneliness. But it so impersonal; the personal touch is missing. The more high tech our society becomes, the more high touch the church must become.

Jesus is offering you a big family and this family of God is called a local church. This is where you can find love and acceptance. Have you heard the phrase “blood is thicker than water?” That means family ties are usually stronger than any other. I’ve got a new one for you to consider: Jesus’ blood is thicker than family. It is only through Jesus’ blood, shed on the cross, that we can be accepted into the Family of God.

“Remember that at one time you were separate from Christ, excluded ... without hope and without God in the world. But now in Christ Jesus you who were once far away have been brought near through the blood of Christ.” Ephesians 2:12-13

That’s why I love to sing, “I’m so glad I’m a part of the family of God.” I love my biological family (even if there are few strange aunts and uncles and cousins). I love my church family, too; even though there are a few folks here who aren’t yet perfect.

For some of you who are widows or single adults, this church is your primary family. That’s wonderful because Jesus was thinking of you when He spoke these words. He opens His arms to you and His arms are the Body of Christ—the church.

A few weeks ago, as hundreds of you stood right here reading through the entire Bible, it was amazing to see God moving in your life. I kept the television on during much of the time. I forget who it was, but once precious lady who lives alone was reading that beautiful passage from Psalm 68 where it says, “God is a father to the fatherless, a defender of widows ... God sets the lonely in families.” As she read those words, I could tell God touched her heart because the tears began to flow. Oh, my friend, if you are feeling lonely or isolated today, Jesus offers you a new family. Come to His Body, the Church and you will find brothers and sisters to love you and accept you.

Don’t expect a perfect church. Just as there aren’t any perfect families, neither are churches perfect. You will find a few knuckleheads and gripers here, too. I like the little poem by Mavis Williams:

If you should find the perfect church
Without one fault or smear;
For goodness sake, don’t join that church;
You’d spoil the atmosphere!

But since no perfect church exists (we’re all imperfect men);
Then please stop looking for that church
And love the church you’re in!
So keep on serving in your church
Until the resurrection
And then we all will form the church
Without an imperfection!

Just as families aren’t perfect, churches aren’t either. But everyone needs a church family, a place where you can have brothers and sisters who will love you and support you.

Now let’s look at the final section of scripture and see how Jesus can meet another one of our needs:

Luke 8:22-25: One day Jesus said to his disciples, “Let’s go over to the other side of the lake.” So they got into a boat and set out. As they sailed, he fell asleep. A squall came down on the lake, so that the boat was being swamped, and they were in great danger. The disciples went and woke him, saying, “Master, Master, we’re going to drown!” He got up and rebuked the wind and the raging waters; the storm subsided, and all was calm. “Where is your faith?” he asked his disciples. In fear and amazement they asked one another, “Who is this? He commands even the winds and the water and they obey him.”

III. IN YOUR TRIBULATION JESUS OFFERS PEACE (22-25)

The Sea of Galilee is actually a beautiful fresh water lake that is 6 miles across and 13 miles long. It is 600 feet below sea level and surrounded by tall mountains. Every year when I visit Israel we take a boat ride out onto the Sea of Galilee. It is usually peaceful and calm. However, the mountains can act like a funnel and a storm can suddenly blow into it with amazing ferocity. Mark tells us this journey was taken at night. So, with no light, and no stars by which to steer, it had to have been a terrible experience. There are four quick lessons I hope we can learn:

1. Storms come even when Jesus is with you

Some Christians make the mistake of thinking just because they have the Lord in their lives they will be immune to trouble, tribulation and problems. Some TV preachers would have you believe if you only have enough faith, your life will be full of health, wealth and prosperity. A new Christian had this erroneous concept and once said to Ron Dunn, “Now that I’m a Christian, I know this is the end of my problems!” Ron said, “Yeah, the front end!”

Even though Jesus was in the boat, the storm still struck. Even though you have Jesus in your life, you will still encounter storms. There will be

Physical storms

Some of you are dealing with cancer at this moment. Others of you are dealing with the pain of arthritis or some other chronic illness. Jesus is in your life, but the storm is still raging. There are

Financial storms

Some of you have more bills than you can possibly pay right now. You are worried at the high price of gasoline or the low value of your stocks. Some of you are without a job right now or you fear you are about to lose your job. Jesus is in your life, but this financial storm is still churning. Right now, many of you are struggling against

Emotional storms

Someone you love is causing you pain. You are living with someone who is dying. Or your mate packed a bag and left without you. Or you live under the dark cloud of fear and anxiety. Sometimes the storms are caused by our own poor choices, and at other times, the storms just blow in for no good reason.

Storms can strike suddenly and without warning. Your life may be smooth sailing for a while, until you receive that phone call telling you a loved one died in an accident or you hear the doctor say the test results were not good. You need to understand having Jesus in your life doesn't make you immune to the storms of life.

2. When you look at the danger, FEAR cries, “Stop the storm!”

In the midst of the storm, the disciples cried out in fear. The biggest problem they faced was not the storm; their biggest problem was their FEAR. Fear can kill a person faster than a storm.

When you are in the midst of a personal storm, fear will cause you to think the very worst is going to happen. They said, “The ship is going to sink, and we are going to drown!” Several years ago, I shared this little acrostic with you:

FEAR = False Evidence Appearing Real

Fear of the storm is usually worse than the storm itself. When Germany started bombing England, Churchill said, “We have nothing to fear except fear itself.” He knew fear could do more damage than Nazi bombs.

Paul Harvey told the story of the Arkansas farmer who kept losing hens to a nighttime predator. He suspected it was a fox so one evening, the farmer left his loaded shotgun beside his bed. When he heard a commotion in the hen house, he snuck out with his shotgun ready to fire. He was wearing only his nightshirt and didn't have a flashlight. As he approached the dark hen house, fear began to take over. He began to worry, “What if this fox is rabid and it bites me before I can kill it? Or what if it's not a fox, but a wildcat?” He was literally shaking with fear as he approached the hen house. He paused to listen. At that very moment, his trusty old hound dog, Blue, who had crept up silently on his master, decided to show his affection. Old blue stuck his nose under the nightshirt and “cold nosed” the farmer from behind. The farmer's finger was on the trigger, and “KABLAM!” Thirty hens lost their lives that night. But it wasn't the shotgun that killed them—it was fear.

As long as you are focused on the storm and the worst that could happen to you, fear will control you. You will be crying out for God to remove your storm. There is another alternative to fear—try faith.

3. When you look at Jesus, *FAITH* says, “I know I’ll reach the other side!”

Now there was Jesus sound asleep in the boat. I love this picture of Jesus sleeping because it reminds us Jesus was a man and He got tired and exhausted and he needed sleep too. But we also see He possessed such an inner tranquility and serenity He could sleep even when a storm was crashing around Him.

When Jesus woke up and calmed the storm, He had only one question of the disciples: “Where is your faith?” In other words, although it took a miracle for Him to still the storm, He expected more faith from the disciples. More faith to do what? To calm the storm themselves? No. Faith to be able to look at Jesus and see because He wasn’t afraid, that they didn’t have to be afraid.

How do you and I get faith in the midst of the storms of life? By listening to the Word of Jesus. Go back and look at verse 22—that’s the key. Jesus said, “Let’s go over to the other side.” When Jesus gives a word, nothing is going to change it. In the midst of the storm, Peter, John or the others could have said, “Yeah, it’s bad. But Jesus said that we were going to the other side. Look at Him, see how calm He is there sleeping in the boat? Okay, let’s just keep rowing and bailing. Everything is going to be fine, because Jesus said, ‘We are going to the other side.’”

Real faith trusts God before the storm, during the storm, and after the storm. Those of you who go on overseas trips with me know I have no trouble sleeping on aircraft. I am often sound asleep by the time we take off and I sleep soundly for six or seven hours. It’s because I know the importance of sleeping through jet lag, but it’s also because I’m not afraid. I figure if I die, I’m actually several thousand feet closer to heaven!

Several years ago, we were flying to the Ukraine and one of our mission volunteers was afraid of flying. Somewhere over the Atlantic, we encountered some terrible turbulence. This lady came to me on the edge of panic. I tried to reassure her. I even said, “Don’t be afraid. We can’t die because I don’t think God is finished with me yet.” She thought about that for a moment and said, “But what if God is finished with somebody *else* on this plane?”

Here’s the final lesson:

4. Jesus doesn’t promise a smooth ride—but He does offer His inner tranquility in the midst of the storm

A few years ago, I read the best-selling non-fiction book, *The Perfect Storm* and last year I saw the movie. There is something fierce and awesome about a storm. The power of a storm is so awesome only God can control it.

You could call this passage the story of the Perfect Storm-calmer. Can't you just see Jesus standing there with the wind whipping his hair and beard and the thunder crashing and the lightning flashing? Foam from the waves is being blown into His face. Jesus sighs and says, “Calm down.” In Mark's gospel, Jesus uses a word a parent would use with a crying child, “Hush. Be still.”

Every storm eventually calms down. The miracle in this story is found in the suddenness of the serenity. It was instantaneous. In a flash, the sea was calm and the winds were quiet; the only sound to be heard was the ragged breath and the pounding hearts of the terrified disciples. I rather think Jesus returned to His nap.

Don't you wish Jesus would stand up in the midst of your storm and make it go away? He sometimes does that, but often He doesn't. But He *always* offers peace. Sometimes He calms the storm and sometimes He calms your heart in the midst of the storm. It would have been just as great a miracle if rather than removing the storm, He had merely spoken these words, “Disciples, hush, be calm, don't fear.”

Are you in the midst of a storm right now? God brought you to church today to hear these reassuring words: “We *are* going to the other side.” He will carry you through a storm.

Here's the promise of Jesus found in John 16:33: Jesus said, “I have told you these things, so that IN ME, you may have peace. In this world you will have trouble. But take heart! I have overcome the world.”

I can't tell you how many times I've quoted that verse. I have been through storms, I am currently in the midst of a big storm, but I'm certain of two things. Jesus is with me, and I'll make it to the other side. And I know there will be future storms after I get to the other side of this one.

André Crouch used to sing,

I thank God for the mountains;
And I thank Him for the valleys;
I thank Him for the storms He's brought me through.
For if I'd never had a problem;
I would never know that God could solve them;
I wouldn't know what faith in God could do;
Through it all, through it all;
I've learned to trust in Jesus, through it all
I've learned to trust in God;
Through it all, through it all;
I've learned to depend upon the Lord!

CONCLUSION

When I was a pastor in my late 20s there was a family in our church whom Cindy and I became good friends with. They were old folks—in their early forties at the time. They had a daughter who was in to all kinds of trouble, and they were struggling through a storm. I preached on this story from Matthew and I can recall visiting with these heartbroken parents. Later, the wife Pat wrote me a note, and she said the only thing I remember from your sermon was “Jesus is in my boat so I know I’ll get to the other side.”

Within a year, her husband, Don, was diagnosed with Hodgkin’s disease. As he was dying, Pat wrote me a letter, and at the bottom, she wrote “Jesus is in my boat, so I know I’ll get to the other side.” After a long battle, Don died at the age of 43, and I could hardly talk during his funeral because we were so close. Within a year, God led us to another church. Pat wrote me a letter telling me she was really struggling with her pain and grief. After she signed her name, Pat wrote at the bottom of her card: But Jesus is in my boat and I know I’ll get to the other side.

We’ve stayed in touch through the years, and two summers ago, when I was on my study leave in Birmingham, Pat invited me to dinner. There on the dinner table was a cake decorated with boat and a figure of Jesus standing in the boat. Can you guess what the words on the cake said? Jesus is still in my boat, and I know I’ll get to the other side!

Folks, I’ve been listening to my own preaching, and whatever happens in the midst of my storm, I know I’ll get to the other side.

Some of you are hurting and struggling with terrible storms right now. In fear, you are begging God to stop them. Look at Jesus. He’s calm. He’s serene. He wants to say to you right now, “My child, hush. Be still. Be calm. We *are* going to make it to the other side.”

If you don’t take away anything else today, will you hang on to this simple thought? Will you repeat it after me? **JESUS IS IN MY BOAT; I KNOW I’LL GET TO THE OTHER SIDE.** When fear comes and you want to run and hide will you say it? **JESUS IS IN MY BOAT; I KNOW I’LL GET TO THE OTHER SIDE.** When the wind picks up and the thunder rolls, and the lightning flashes will you say it? **JESUS IS IN MY BOAT; I KNOW I’LL GET TO THE OTHER SIDE!**

That’s the faith that leads to the peace that passes all human understanding. Jesus knows you need it and He is offering it to you today.

What’s your need? Do you need truth? It’s found in the word of God. But if you don’t obey it, you will lose the little that you have. Are you feeling lonely and isolated? Here’s a great big family opening our arms to you saying, “Come just as you are” we will love you and accept you the way Jesus loves and accepts you. Or do you need that inner peace and tranquility so that, like Jesus, you can sleep soundly in the midst of the storm? Come to Jesus—He really *is* all you need!

OUTLINE

I. FOR YOUR CONFUSION, JESUS OFFERS TRUTH (16-18)

God's truth: Use it (obey) or lose it!

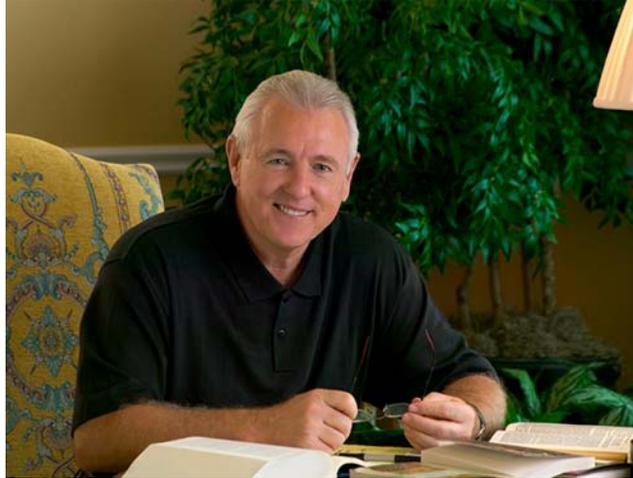
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 - a. Physical storms
 - b. Financial storms
 - c. Emotional storms
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3. When you look at Jesus, FAITH says, “I know I’ll reach the other side!”
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If you borrow the majority of a message or outline, I encourage you to simply preface your remarks by saying something like: ***“Some (or “much” as the case may be) of the ideas I’m sharing in this message came from a message by Pastor David Dykes in Texas.”*** This simple citation may prevent any criticism that may be directed toward you.

To put it in Texas terms, “You’re mighty welcome to use any and all of my ingredients; just make your own chili!”

For the Joy...
Pastor David Dykes