

Sermon Title: Responding to the Shipwrecks, April 22, 2012 (Scripture is from ESV)

Introduction

Good afternoon everyone. It's my pleasure to bring the word of God to you all today. The message I am going to give today is one that I need you all to be careful not to take out of context. In fact, it's a good balancing message to a sermon I gave last November at Itaewon called, "God Wants to Satisfy You." In that message I spoke about how God wants to satisfy us relationally, sexually, and in one other way that some of you might be offended by me saying. It's a good message and I want to encourage you all to listen to it. That message taken completely out of context can create selfishness and an attitude of, "I was made to be satisfied by God and that's it." That of course wasn't the point of the message and if you listen fully to it, you will understand everything and be blessed by it. Listen to that message!

Today's message is going to come from the opposite spectrum, and you'll understand how from the verses we are going to start off with. Please open your Bibles to 2Corinthians 11 and we are going to read verses 24 – 27. This portion of Scripture is from the apostle Paul sharing about his sufferings as he lived for God.

2Corinthians 11:24-27 – Five times I received at the hands of the Jews the forty lashes less one. **Three times I was shipwrecked**; a night and a day I was adrift at sea; on frequent journeys, in danger from rivers, danger from robbers, danger from my own people, danger from Gentiles, danger in the city, danger in the wilderness, danger at sea, danger from false brothers; in toil and hardship, through many a sleepless night, in hunger and thirst, often without food, in cold and exposure.

So while my last message was a happy and light, "God Wants to Satisfy You," this message is a little more heavily titled, "**Responding to the Shipwrecks.**" "Responding to the Shipwrecks." But don't worry, as crazy as that passage we just read was, you're going to feel stronger after this message. I guarantee it.

What's a Shipwreck?

So my question to you all as I begin this message today is, "**How many of you, in your journey that is called life, have been through a shipwreck before?**" A literal shipwreck is a lot more than just a car accident where your mode of transportation breaks down and there might be injury involved. A literal shipwreck likely means you lose all your belongings and are stranded on some foreign island or left at sea for some time, completely off your original course. For us, a shipwreck might be suddenly losing our job when we least expected to, or a family member suddenly becoming seriously ill, or a relationship that we had invested so much in suddenly breaking apart without much warning. These shipwrecks in life can be devastating because they can cause us to question if we really know what we're doing with our lives and if God is really listening to our prayers.

Let me give you some **examples of shipwrecks in the Bible**: Moses tries to defend an Israelite and ends up killing an Egyptian. Pharaoh finds out and Moses has to run for his life into a foreign land where he becomes a shepherd for 40 years. Talk about a shipwreck in life. For David he was rising up to the top of King Saul's army and was in full submission to the king when the king completely turned on him and sought his life. For an extended time of David's life he found himself trying to hide from King Saul in the wilderness, having left his wife and his family behind. That is another dramatic shipwreck. And how about Joseph? He was sold by his brothers to foreigners who then sold him to Potiphar in Egypt. And then, just as he was adjusting and beginning to prosper, he was falsely accused of trying to sleep with

Potiphar's wife and was thrown into prison. Double shipwreck!!! Even Jesus, our precious Lord and Savior, faced shipwrecks. John the Baptist was the forerunner to his ministry, a blood relative of his, and even baptized him. And yet later when John was in jail he sent to Jesus asking if Jesus really was the Messiah. Jesus' forerunner was suddenly struggling to believe in him. And later John was beheaded by King Herod. I imagine Jesus was prepared as much as he could have been for Judas to betray him, but for his own relative, forerunner, and man he looked to baptize him to have doubted him and then to have been cruelly executed, I imagine that was an extremely heavy moment for Jesus. After hearing the news and having to minister we read that Jesus spent the night alone on a mountain. Even the Savior of the World needed time to recover.

What we need to understand church is that **we have to face the reality that shipwrecks happen**. Shipwrecks happen. I don't say this to bring fear or anxiety, **I actually say this to bring peace**. Let me explain...

New Philadelphia Church has changed quite a bit over the years. We used to send mission teams out in the summers and winters just to visit churches in ministries in other countries and do VBS songs, dance to a worship song, do a skit or two, and preach a message. If we saw someone very sick we would pray for them, but more so out of empathy for the person rather than really targeting the sickness.

As time passed and our church matured, we started to see much more healing on the mission field, and healings begin to happen here in Korea as well. Now rather than expressing empathy for a sick person, we would get angry at the sickness and call it a lie and rebuke it. We've been trained not to succumb to the enemies attacks but to fight, fight, fight in prayer. We are more than conquerors, and that is the truth! It's been beautiful to see people claiming their inheritance and claiming their God given identity. Testimonies from the mission field and from here within our church have been so encouraging.

But I have to ask you all, what happens when we have a shipwreck? What happens when we are suddenly thrown off course and things don't seem to make sense? What happens when the person we've been fighting and fighting and fighting for in prayer doesn't get healed but passes away? Or when suddenly our job or relationships fall apart? How do we respond? Do we point fingers at ourselves and beat ourselves up? Do we blame our leaders for not praying for us more or leading us better? Do we blame God for not warning us or not taking care of us? How do we respond?

I've already shared a few shipwrecks in the Bible, but I think the most glaring shipwreck to me was the death of the apostle James in the book of Acts. Jesus, during His life on earth, had three disciples that He took special time with among the twelve. Their names were Peter, James, and John. For whatever reason, Jesus would include these three when He would do special miracles, when He transfigured Himself on the mountain, and even when He was about to be betrayed He had these three close to Him. These three had seen and learned from Jesus more than anyone else. The potential they possessed was ridiculous!

And yet, not even halfway through the book of Acts, the apostle James is arrested and killed. Just like that! This guy that was one of the most intimate with Jesus, that possessed such great potential, just as the church was beginning to bloom... he is arrested and killed. Think about how the church at that time had to have felt. Completely shipwrecked. And what was even wilder was that Peter was then immediately arrested and expected to be executed. This

was happening to the church at a time when it seemed to be the most unified and the most in tune with God out of any time in history.

For a New Philly Equivalent, you could say Pastors Jon, Marcus, and Myung Hwa are Pastor Christian's inner three. They were the first three intern pastors and have served very closely with Pastor Christian. They have each gotten their degree from seminary, worked really hard to become the pastors they are today, and have clearly grown in the anointing with there being no limit before them. The potential for their lives is ridiculous!

And then suddenly... something bad happens... and one of them is gone. It's a horrible thought, but this is what happened to the early church. That was how heavy a shipwreck they faced. For the early church they lost the deacon Stephen who was martyred, but in Stephen's case he was clearly standing for the Lord and his death was beautiful, as you can read about in Acts chapter seven. But for James, it was prison and then a prompt execution and he was gone. There was no parting of the heavens or James shining like an angel. For all we know no one was there to witness James grisly death but the undertaker himself.

I think a lot of questions could have been asked regarding James by the early church: "Did we pray enough?" "Were we walking in God's wisdom?" "Should we have done something differently or done something more?" "Is God not listening to our prayers?" "Are we really so vulnerable before the enemy?"

But how do you think Jesus was responding to the death of James in heaven? Do you really think He was saying, "Man, I should have chosen Bartholomew or Simeon instead of James. What a waste!!!" I have trouble seeing Jesus being surprised by what happened to James.

Now let me ask you, do you think that Stephen's death and the apostle James' death were a result of the early church doing things wrong, or doing things right? For the church, to have just lost one of their greatest up and comers in Stephen who had just been anointed as a deacon in the church, and then to lose one of their greatest pillars in James, I imagine there could have been feelings of distress and even chaos. What was going on??? Some may have felt that the church was failing in their battle with the enemy, or that they had done something wrong to incur God's discipline.

So often we think because we are sick or because there is hardship or a shipwreck in life, that we are a failure or have done something wrong, when in fact God is allowing it because we are strong enough and worthy enough to grow through it. And for some things, let's be honest church, it's just not going to make sense to us. But I don't think trying to analyze a shipwreck in life is exactly what God wants from us. Rather, I believe God is looking for a specific response. What do we do when we are faced with a shipwreck? What do we do when suddenly life takes a huge turn and things are looking bleak? I have just one point to share with you all, so please take it in...

REST

How do you respond to a shipwreck? **You respond with rest.** You respond with rest. Please look at your neighbor and say to them, "**I need to rest.**"

There were only a couple near shipwrecks recorded in detail in Scripture and then just one full out shipwreck that was recorded in detail. The first was when Jonah was running away from God's command. Now many people are down on Jonah and call him a coward for running away from God's command to prophesy to the scary Nineveh, but these same people

don't know Biblical history that well. Jonah was actually one of the most faith-filled men in Scripture. He was a prophet in Israel at a time when God was calling Israel to repent. When God told him to turn from Israel to go preach to Nineveh, the capital of Assyria, Jonah knew that God was going to bring punishment on Israel. Jonah knew that by the people of Nineveh repenting, they could be used by God to punish the Israelites. And Jonah, being a prophet, knew that would mean Assyria would conquer the land that he loved, kill many of his friends and family, and enslave the children. Jonah didn't want this, so he disobeyed God and ran.

And you all know the story, he got on a ship to go the opposite direction from Nineveh and he wanted to get as far away as possible. But God sent a mighty storm against the ship that threatened to destroy it. And how did Jonah respond to the shipwreck? Let me read for you Jonah 1:5-6.

Jonah 1:5-6 – Then the mariners were afraid, and each cried out to his god. And they hurled the cargo that was in the ship into the sea to lighten it for them. But Jonah had gone down into the inner part of the ship and **had lain down and was fast asleep**. So the captain came and said to him, “What do you mean, you sleeper? Arise, call out to your god! Perhaps the god will give a thought to us, that we may not perish.”

How did Jonah respond to the storm and the ship falling apart? He slept, peacefully.

Now maybe Jonah was a bad example because the storm came from his disobedience. But let me share another example: Jesus. I'm going to read Matthew 8:24-27.

Matthew 8:24-27 – And when he got into the boat, his disciples followed him. And behold, there arose a great storm on the sea, so that the boat was being swamped by the waves; but he was asleep. And they went and woke him, saying, “Save us, Lord; we are perishing.” And he said to them, “Why are you afraid, O you of little faith?” Then he rose and rebuked the winds and the sea, and there was a great calm. And the men marveled, saying, “What sort of man is this, that even winds and sea obey him?”

So Jonah wasn't the only one who slept through a storm that threatened to take everyone's life. Jesus was asleep as well. **In moments that to the world around them seemed catastrophic, both were found resting.**

In Acts chapter 27 there is a long, detailed account of one of the three shipwrecks Paul endured during his life. For this shipwreck it lasted more than two weeks, so we don't read about Paul sleeping the entire time. But what do we read of Paul was that out of everyone on board, he was the most relaxed. He was the one who encouraged everyone to take heart. He was the one who reminded the fear-filled men to eat and find strength. Paul was relaxed and continued to comfort and strengthen the men. The whole world around him seemed to be falling apart, but we don't read about Paul crying out to God or being filled with anxiety. Instead we read of him calling the men together to eat.

Think about this: Paul, a man that most Christians look to as having lived a life as obedient to God as possible, the man many consider to have been the greatest apostle and church leader ever... he endured three shipwrecks in his life. Was Paul not praying enough? Was Paul not claiming his identity in Christ enough? Was Paul constantly slipping up so God was sending shipwrecks? Clearly not.

The story in Acts about the shipwreck continues into chapter 28. Paul and the men finally reach ground on some foreign island and they gather around a fire to get warm. Poor Paul has just survived his first shipwreck that took more than two weeks to endure. I imagine he was relieved to get some rest. And what happens? A poisonous snake jumps out from the fire and bites his hand!!! Now he is expected to die from the poison!!! This would be like surviving a crazy plane crash to only be run over and killed by the ambulance. Poor Paul!!! I think most people would have cursed God or fallen apart at that point. I mean, how much is this guy supposed to endure?

But what does Paul do? He remains relaxed. He shakes off the viper into the fire and went on with what he was doing. And the poison ended up not harming him at all. Think about that.

Did Jonah die or suffer severe injury from the horrible storm? No. Did Jesus die or suffer severe injury from the horrible storm? No. Did Paul die or suffer severe injury from his shipwreck? No. They were all relaxed. None of them allowed the storms to throw them off. And when Paul was bitten by the poisonous viper did he die or suffer severe injury? No. He remained relaxed. And the poison didn't harm him at all.

This is the power of rest.

What Does It Mean to Rest?

But what does it mean for you to rest during a shipwreck? What does it mean to rest in general?

Let me explain...

This summer Jerusalem Ministry will be hosting two summer volunteer interns who will be living and serving together full time in a children's home. Recently I have been Skyping with them and training them. Right now they have to raise about \$2,200 in support for the summer and follow through with some different homework assignments. As I shared the different requirements and expectations for them, I could tell it was a lot for them to handle. One of them had only raised \$400 before for another mission trip. \$2,200 is a lot compared to \$400. Raising support can also lead to a burden of trying to earn the support money or justify what you're doing. Feelings like, "unless there are 10 salvations or more, then I've failed," can hang over peoples' heads in ministry. We all want to be successful, but sometimes things can seem too difficult.

And this is what I told her, "**You cannot fail.** As long as you just be yourself, you cannot fail. It's not about what you do that determines your success, it's just about you being who you are." I told her, "You felt led by God to apply for this internship. You were glowingly recommended by your pastor and by your ministry partner. Your parents approve of what you are doing. The Jerusalem Ministry leaders were led to accept you. God's blessing is clearly all over you for this internship. **And His blessing is over you not because you can do anything to earn it. You can't earn what has already been given to you. His blessing is over you because of who you are.** You are clearly walking with God. God isn't wanting you to become a different person or to do all sorts of things that you haven't been doing before. He expects you to simply continue to walk with Him. And as you walk with Him and keep under submission to the leadership, then you can REST and know that you cannot fail. We aren't expecting some other person to show up, we are expecting you. We want you to be who you are with the kids. You will have responsibilities to carry out, but we know

these responsibilities already fit you. We aren't going to give you responsibilities that are beyond you.

I continued to tell her: You cannot fail. You leave the results to God. He is the author and perfecter of the children's faith. If God was expecting some sort of performance that is beyond you, then God would have chosen someone else. But instead God set you up or this ministry at this time. So relax. God will guide you. God will give you the wisdom and the grace you need. It's not by our might or by our strength but it's by God's Spirit (Zechariah 4:6). So relax, and know God will take care of you.

That's what rest is: **Walking with the Lord and in submission, trusting that God desires the best for us and works all things for our good.**

My wife Sky said it so well the other night. She said, **"It's dangerous for sheep to run around in the pasture. They need to lie down."** She was referring to Psalm 23:1, where we read...

Psalm 23:1-2a – The Lord is my shepherd; I shall not want. He makes me lie down in green pastures.

Why does God make us lie down? Because He is the author and perfecter. Because He is our provider and our protector. **Because the moment we start running around we are showing that we have more faith in us providing for ourselves than we do for God providing for us.** The moment we feel fear or anxiety overtake us, we are not in rest. Instead we are believing in the fear and anxiety more than we are believing in God as our provider and protector. We are like the disciples looking at the storm and crying out for help. Our faith is more in the danger of the storm and of the shipwreck than it is in faith that God will guide us, protect us, and bless us.

If we respond to shipwrecks in any other way than rest, then we are going to be overcome by the shipwreck. But if we remain steadfast in our trust of God and of the authorities He has set over us, then we will be fine.

Now I'm not saying that we shouldn't do anything if a crisis comes. We need to follow the leading of the Spirit as we walk with God and we also need to follow the leading of the leaders that God has set over us. If that means being led or instructed to take extra time to pray and fast, then we take extra time to pray and fast. We follow through on what God and our leaders call for us to do. But the moment we start running around and put our faith more in our works of prayer and fasting rather than in God's goodness, we are going to get overrun and swept away. We have to remain in a place of rest. God is our good shepherd, we will not be in want.

Why Are There Shipwrecks?

I honestly believe God allows for shipwrecks not for us, but for the people around us. I don't think there were any major changes in the lives of Jonah, Jesus, and Paul throughout their storms and shipwrecks, do you? Perhaps their faith grew, but they seemed at peace the whole way. Instead, the major changes came to the lives of those around them. For the sailors who witnessed Jonah's demeanor and saw what happened, Scripture says that they feared God greatly. The disciples who witnessed Jesus calming the storm were filled with awe and their weak faith received a huge boost. The men on Paul's boat who endured the shipwreck with him were all saved as a result of Paul's peace and wisdom. And after Paul was bitten by the

poisonous snake but remained relaxed and suffered no ill effect? All the natives of the island responded with faith.

Your response to the shipwrecks you endure in life, whether big or small, are not just for your growth but are for the witness of your family, your friends, and the nation you are living in. Life isn't all about you. It's often during the shipwrecks that our faith shines the brightest to those around us. So just relax and be the light of the world God made you to be.

Remember the story I shared of how the apostle James was arrested and abruptly killed and how it must have shook the church? And then the apostle Peter was subsequently arrested and was likely about to face execution? How did Peter respond to all this? His close friend and great leader in the church James had just been killed and now Peter was locked away alone in prison, awaiting his own execution. Wouldn't you be on edge? Wouldn't you be fearing death or wondering where God was in everything? Wouldn't you think, "If James was killed, then how can I expect to be protected too?"

Well, what did Peter do? If you read Acts 12 you see that he... slept. Here was a guy whose life and ministry seemed to be on the brink of death and disaster, and he was sleeping peacefully. Rest easy everyone, God is in control.

Walk With God and Submit to Authority

I want to summarize this message to make sure the points are clear. Yes, as Christians we need to understand that shipwrecks happen. There will be moments in our lives that may catch us off guard completely or seem difficult to endure. But we aren't supposed to respond with fear, anxiety, or stress. We are to respond with rest. We are to simply continue to walk with God knowing that He is control and will protect us and provide for us and comfort us. We are to trust in our spiritual authorities as well and know that we are safe. God is our shepherd, and we shall not be in want.

But does that mean we are supposed to do nothing? Of course not. If we are truly walking with God and in submission to authority, then we will likely receive wisdom and guidance through both the Lord and our authorities in how we are to respond. And we are to simply be faithful with our response, not worrying about trying to do anything beyond what God or our leaders have asked of us.

We respond to the shipwrecks in rest. God won't give us anything we can't handle. We just need to look to God and to our leaders for guidance. And we trust in the goodness of the Lord. Some things might happen that we can't explain, like the death of the apostle James, but we just have to trust that as we continue to walk faithfully with God He will lead us and give us all the wisdom that we need. And we might not know it, but often the world around us is increasing in faith as we endure.

Invite praise team up and pray

Altar Call

- Those in a shipwreck right now (explain Galatians 6:2 "heavy burden" and 6:5 "regular load")... we want to take some time to help carry each other's burdens

Galatians 6:2 – Bear one another's burdens, and so fulfill the law of Christ

Galatians 6:5 – For each will have to bear his own load.