

Faithful Presence Crushes False Security

✠ in terrible times (vv.1-5)

✠ for fruitful life (vv.6-9)

In the Name of Jesus our determined Savior, dear fellow redeemed:

How dangerous is **False Security**? Ask the loved ones of astronauts lost in the Space Shuttle Challenger disaster on January 28, 1986, 36 years ago. The best of the best planned the mission, checked and rechecked systems, figures, everything they could think of that might possibly go wrong. And yet the world watched shortly after lift-off as the Space Shuttle Challenger disintegrated right before our eyes. Six astronauts and one teacher, Christa McAuliffe a “Payload Specialist,” all perished. And what did the investigation reveal? Two redundant O-ring seals failed. Record low temperatures at launch reduced the elasticity of the rubber O-rings, so they leaked pressurized gas which finally exploded.¹ It was too cold. “Hindsight,” as they say, “is 2020.” Here we are in 2022, and still humans suffer **False Security**. Our best efforts fail, but God’s promises stand. God’s **Faithful Presence Crushes False Security**.

✠ in terrible times (vv.1-5)

When we say the Lord’s Prayer, “*Thy kingdom come,*” we’re asking the Lord to rule our hearts and lives, to crush our **False Security**. His gracious rule promises, “*If two of you on earth agree to ask for anything, it will be done for them by my Father who is in heaven.*” (Matthew 18:19 EHV²)

One of my favorite examples of this happened earlier in Jesus ministry. There was a paralyzed man whose friends brought him to Jesus. But the house was so crowded they couldn’t get in. So they dug a hole through the flat roof, and lowered their friend down right in front of Jesus. Before Jesus heals him, He **Crushes False Security**. To the paralyzed man Jesus says, “*Son, be of good cheer; your sins are forgiven.*” (Matthew 9:2 TPA) As usual, the Jewish religious leaders are ticked at Jesus. “*Who can forgive sins except God alone?*” *Jesus immediately knew in his spirit that they were thinking this way within themselves. He asked them, “Why are you thinking these things in your hearts? Which is easier: to tell the paralyzed man, ‘Your sins are forgiven,’ or to say, ‘Get up, take your stretcher, and walk’? But, so that you may know that the Son of Man has authority on earth to forgive sins”—he said to the paralyzed man, “I tell you, get up, take your stretcher, and go home.” At once the man got up, picked up the stretcher, and went out in front of everyone.* (Mark 2:7–12) Amazing! Glory to God!

And here’s what grabs my attention for this sermon. Jesus never asked the man, “How did you get this way?” Humans constantly try to gain **False Security** by explaining *why* things happen in the news. In Jesus’ time Governor Pontius Pilate committed another atrocity by killing some Galileans during temple worship, mixing their blood with their sacrifices. Another disaster happened when a tower fell on eighteen citizens. In both cases Jesus asks, “*Were they worse sinners?*” Twice He answers, “**No.**”

Jesus brings us into his kingdom by giving the gift of faith, and you start thinking about loved ones who need Jesus too. Is someone sick and dying? You want to bring your friend to Jesus. Ask a few friends to help. In prayer you can each grab a rope and dig through all life’s distractions, past questions *Why?* and just ask Jesus for mercy. No matter what, each of us can say, “There but for God’s grace go I.” Then be ready to share what great things God has done for you in mercy day by day and for eternity.

¹ https://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/Space_Shuttle_Challenger_disaster

² EHV ~ *Evangelical Heritage Version* (<http://wartburgproject.org>) © 2019. NPH: 800-662-6022, Amazon-Kindle, LOGOS.

Christ is our Rock. Without Him there is no life for anyone. But with Jesus guiding and directing your life, He turns even your worst experiences into blessings. He assured the Apostle Paul: **“My grace is sufficient for you, because my power is made perfect in weakness.”** Paul responded, **“Therefore I will be glad to boast all the more in my weaknesses, so that the power of Christ may shelter me.”** (2 Corinthians 12:9) Sick and dying friends need the key to God’s mercy. When some are tempted to think the suffering of others is because they’re worse sinners, Jesus warns twice: **“I tell you, no. But unless you repent, you will all perish too.”** (Luke 13:3,5) The key word is **repent** – *change your mind about sin, self, and Savior.* Sin of any kind must be punished by God. My *self* is constant sin. My *Savior*, full of grace and mercy, took all my guilt and punishment on Himself. Again today we confessed our guilt to God. In kindness and mercy God told us, “Your sins are forgiven.” Now Christ commands us to bring this message of full and free forgiveness to all, no matter what they’ve said or done or messed up in their life. Calling us all to repentance, Jesus kindly says, **“Be of good cheer; your sins are forgiven.”**

✠ for fruitful life (vv.6-9)

Jesus tells a parable to illustrate. It’s simple enough to understand. A man has a fruitless fig tree. Naturally, he tells his gardener to cut it down. But surprisingly the gardener asks for more time to do more work like digging around the tree and fertilizing it. Can you see how Jesus is like the gardener, mercifully asking for more time to work on you and me and all our friends? God’s not done with us yet!

Sometimes guilty sinners get very depressed, feeling as if they’re only taking up space. And that’s the message of evolution that claims all living organisms have to die and get out of the way for higher life forms. Ever wonder why people are so depressed? Higher education has been telling them for years they evolved from slime. You and I need to tell them that they are the Creator’s special creation. God’s Son is their Savior too. In His grace and mercy, God does not condemn us, but gives us another year in which He earnestly commits Himself to producing fruit in our lives through His special tools that communicate the Good News of God’s love. He does not want us just taking up space. God wants to give us such rich, full purpose throughout our lives that He can say, **“The righteous will flourish like a palm tree, they will grow like a cedar of Lebanon; planted in the house of the LORD, they will flourish in the courts of our God. They will still bear fruit in old age, they will stay fresh and green, proclaiming, “The LORD is upright; he is my Rock, and there is no wickedness in him.”** (Psalm 92:12-15 NIV84)

“The cross was the sword Jesus used to demolish the grip of sin and death.” His **Faithful Presence Crushes False Security – in terrible times, for fruitful life.** “We can understand why Jesus had to die on his cross, we just don’t grasp why we should have to take up a cross in our own lives.” Ever feel like God is dumping on you? Did you hear the gardener ask for time to fertilize the tree? “Yet God often uses hardships to do his gracious work in our lives, teaching us more about his love and grace. When we shoulder the crosses of our lives, we meet the one who took up his cross that we might live. He is present in His Holy Word to strengthen us. He is present to nourish us in the Holy Supper of his body and blood, once given in payment for the sin of the world.” He is present always with us on whom He placed His Name in baptism. “We find that when we are weakest, that’s when we are truly strong in the strength of his love. We learn that his grace is sufficient. His cross is disturbing only to sin and guilt and shame. Therefore, bearing our crosses gladly, we find out what that life is all about.”³

Hearing God’s Word brings God’s promise and warning that our time of grace will end. **“Today, if you hear his voice, do not harden your hearts as in the rebellion.”** (Hebrews 3:15) **“Humble yourselves, therefore, under God’s mighty hand, that he may lift you up in due time. ⁷ Cast all your anxiety on him because he cares for you.”** (1 Peter 5:6f NIV84) Tomorrow may be too late. Jesus says, **“The Son of Man came to seek and to save what was lost.”** (Luke 19:9f NIV84) Keep praying for your friends and loved ones to **repent.** While there’s life, there’s hope. God’s fruit of faith in them is joy for Jesus. Amen.

³ Senkbeil, Harold L. *Where in the world is God?* “12. The Disturbing Peace of Christ.” NPH © 1999; 2nd Printing, 2002. *The Preacher’s Apprentice (TPA)* sermon study or copies: m.cordes@comast.net . New Life Evangelical Lutheran Church You can also call: 651-484-1169. Hear the sermon at www.newlifeshoreview.com . 180 County Rd F - Shoreview, MN 55126