

Pastor's Message  
August 16, 2020

Hi Brothers and Sisters in Christ,

Hope you are all doing well!!

This week we continue reflecting on Paul's letter to the Corinthians. Throughout this sermon series, let us listen to the words of Paul letter, as if this letter was written to our group of friends, to our group of colleagues or to our group of sisters and brothers in Christ to see what advice Paul has to offer for us in these challenging times.

Hope to see you tomorrow.

God's Peace!

Pastor Denise

## 2 Corinthians 4:1-18

A reading from the 4<sup>th</sup> chapter of 2<sup>nd</sup> Corinthians.

### **Trial and Torture**

**4** <sup>1-2</sup> Since God has so generously let us in on what he is doing, we're not about to throw up our hands and walk off the job just because we run into occasional hard times.

We refuse to wear disguises and play games. We don't maneuver and manipulate behind the scenes. And we don't twist God's Word to suit ourselves. Rather, we keep everything we do and say out in the open, the whole truth on display, so that those who want to can see and judge for themselves in the presence of God.

<sup>3-4</sup> If our Message is obscure to anyone, it's not because we're holding back in any way. No, it's because these other people are looking or going the wrong way and refuse to give it serious attention. All they have eyes for is the fashionable god of darkness.

They think he can give them what they want, and that they won't have to bother believing a Truth they can't see.

They're stone-blind to the dayspring brightness of the Message that shines with Christ, who gives us the best picture of God we'll ever get.

<sup>5-6</sup> Remember, our Message is not about ourselves; we're proclaiming Jesus Christ, the Master. All we are is messengers, errand runners from Jesus for you. It started when God said, "Light up the darkness!" and our lives filled up with light as we saw and understood God in the face of Christ, all bright and beautiful.

<sup>7-12</sup> If you only look at *us*, you might well miss the brightness. We carry this precious Message around in the unadorned clay pots of our ordinary lives. That's to prevent anyone from confusing God's incomparable power with us. As it is, there's not much chance of that. You know for yourselves that we're not much to look at.

We've been surrounded and battered by troubles, but we're not demoralized;

we're not sure what to do, but we know that God knows what to do; we've been spiritually terrorized, but God hasn't left our side; we've been thrown down, but we haven't broken.

What they did to Jesus, they do to us—trial and torture, mockery and murder; what Jesus did among them, he does in us—he lives! Our lives are at constant risk for Jesus' sake, which makes Jesus' life all the more evident in us. While we're going through the worst, you're getting in on the best!

**13-15** We're not keeping this quiet, not on your life. Just like the psalmist who wrote, "I believed it, so I said it," we say what we believe.

And what we believe is that the One who raised up the Master Jesus will just as certainly raise us up with you,

alive. Every detail works to your advantage and to God's glory: more and more grace, more and more people, more and more praise!

**16-18** So we're not giving up. How could we! Even though on the outside it often looks like things are falling apart on us, on the inside, where God is making new life, not a day goes by without his unfolding grace.

These hard times are small potatoes compared to the coming good times, the lavish celebration prepared for us. There's far more here than meets the eye. The things we see now are here today, gone tomorrow. But the things we can't see now will last forever.

The Word of the Lord

Grace and Peace to you from God our Father and Jesus Christ our Lord and Savior.

AMEN

This morning for the hymn of the day,  
we will be singing the hymn entitled  
*How Clear is our Vocation Lord*

I invite you to listen carefully to the  
words of the first verse of this song as  
we prepare to reflect on the counsel  
that Paul is offering in his letter to the  
Corinthians.

### **How Clear Is Our Vocation, Lord**

1 How clear is our vocation, Lord,  
when once we heed your call  
to live according to your word  
and daily learn, refreshed, restored,  
that you are Lord of all,  
and will not let us fall.

Once we not only get the message, but  
obey the command of God's message  
– God's purpose for our lives becomes  
clear – when once we heed God's call  
to live according to God's word –  
when once we humble ourselves to the  
reality that there is always more to  
learn about God and God's ways –

and when once we are receptive to  
those daily insights and lessons about  
God, our lives will be refreshed and  
restored and our vocation and the  
priorities of our lives will come into  
focus.

In the prayer of the day, we confessed  
that God has come to make immortal  
things visible through mortals and we  
asked God to use us and our lives to  
reflect God's glory.

Use the work that God has called us to  
do as mere mortals so that others may  
get to know the message that God is  
Love, that God is steadfast, that God  
is merciful and gracious and that God  
is Lord of all and will not let us fall.

And Paul reminds the Corinthians that  
in doing all that responding to God's  
call - remember that you are the  
messenger – not the message.

As I walked my dog Sam early  
yesterday morning among the office  
buildings near where I live, I saw this  
amazing sunrise. It seemed to just  
glow. It was such brilliant orange with  
streaks of gold and some pink. It had

so caught my attention that I stood for a few moments in awe of such a breath taking encounter. God was certainly creative with God's paint box that morning.

And then I realized that I was facing west and that was not where the sun rose, but that what I was looking at was a reflection of the sunrise in a wall of windows on one of the office buildings. I turned around to see the "real sunrise" ready for a spectacular view only to be disappointed by the fact that from where I was standing my view of the actual sunrise was blocked by buildings and trees.

I didn't think much more about that experience until later that morning, as I sat down to put my thoughts together for this morning's sermon and I reread the prayer of the day and I came upon the phrase: use me Lord to reflect your Glory.

Now I don't believe that inanimate object such as windows pray, but if they did and if they prayed our prayer of the day for God to use them to reflect God's glory. Their prayers were certainly answered yesterday morning.

In this letter, Paul gives us a few images of the work that we are called

to do as disciples of Christ, some of his words I find humbling, some of his words I must admit I find confusing and convoluted and some I hear as words of encouragement, challenge and support.

He first reminds the Corinthians that they are not the message, the message is not even about them, it's not about how successful they are or how much they have struggled .

The message is always about God and what God has done from the beginning of time, what God has done through the life, the death and the resurrection of his beloved son Jesus, and what God continues to do in them, among them and through them.

The kingdom work that we have been called to do, is not the message, but it is through this work that we are able to fulfill our purpose in God's kingdom and that is to be the messenger. Who we are, what we do and how we do it is not the message.

Just like the wall of windows of that office building is not the sunset, they are the windows their purpose in life to let light into the building. Yet, because of the inherent properties of the glass, they reflected the beautiful

sunrise and I was able to experience in that encounter God's glory.

We are not the message. We are not the Savior. We are not the one who was born of the virgin Mary. We are not the ones who can walk on water. But, we are the ones who God will use to spread the Word of what God has done and continues to do for us.

We are not the sunrise – we are like the windows, reflecting the glory of God by just going about the tasks of our ordinary lives.

Paul further explains it this way.

<sup>5-6</sup> Remember, our Message is not about ourselves; we're proclaiming Jesus Christ, the Master. All we are is messengers, errand runners from Jesus for you. It started when God said, "Light up the darkness!" and our lives filled up with light as we saw and understood God in the face of Christ, all bright and beautiful.

Paul goes on to say that we carry this message – this light around inside of us. He says:

<sup>7-12</sup> If you only look at *us*, you might well miss the brightness. We carry this precious Message around in the unadorned clay pots of our ordinary lives.

So our job, our vocation is to share the light of Christ with the world, and we who are the bearers of this light are not some ornate fancy lantern, but we the bearers of this divine light are something as simple and ordinary as a clay pot.

Which says to me that God is not about the glitz and the glam that would catch our attention and would most likely distract us from the message. But that God wants for us to know him and be comfortable with him. So God comes to us through one another in our ordinary lives so that we can hear God's message of love, of acceptance, of grace, and of forgiveness without being distracted.

How clear our vocation becomes when we give up trying to be the message. How clear our vocation becomes when we give up trying to dazzle or impress people. And how clear our vocation becomes when we instead focus our efforts on being the messenger through the ordinariness of our daily lives.

And in doing so, we become like the wall of windows on the office building; just doing its ordinary job of letting the daylight into the building.

while being used by God to reflect  
God's glory.

How clear our vocation becomes when  
once we heed God's call to live  
according to God's word.

How clear our vocation becomes when  
once we daily spend time learning,  
refreshing, restoring our connection to  
God.

So that, we can proclaim with joy in  
our hearts that God is Lord of all, and  
trust with all our hearts that God will  
never ever ever let us fall.

AMEN

### *Blessing*

Neither death, nor life, nor angels, nor rulers,  
nor things present, nor things to come,  
nor powers, nor height, nor depth,  
nor anything else in all creation,  
will be able to separate us from the love of God in Christ Jesus.

God, the creator, † Jesus, the Christ,  
and the Holy Spirit, the comforter,  
bless you and keep you in eternal love.

*Amen.*