

Message: “Facing Trouble”, Week 2 of “Unshakable Series”

Presented by Rev. Kristen Lowe on 08-28-2016, at Crossroads United Methodist Church, Waunakee, WI. Acknowledgement to Nelson Searcy from his book Unshakable.

There are many things the Bible tells us, but there’s one message that repeats over 360 times – “do not be afraid.” God reminds us that in Him we can have peace. In Him we can have hope, and when trouble comes, we are held by the one who has overcome trouble. But we must put our trust in Him.

Matthew 7:24-29

²⁴“Therefore everyone who hears these words of mine and puts them into practice is like a wise man who built his house on the rock. ²⁵The rain came down, the streams rose, and the winds blew and beat against that house; yet it did not fall, because it had its foundation on the rock. ²⁶But everyone who hears these words of mine and does not put them into practice is like a foolish man who built his house on sand. ²⁷The rain came down, the streams rose, and the winds blew and beat against that house, and it fell with a great crash.” ²⁸When Jesus had finished saying these things, the crowds were amazed at his teaching, ²⁹because he taught as one who had authority, and not as their teachers of the law.

John 16:33

“I have told you all this so that you may have peace in me. In this world you will have trouble. But take heart... I have overcome the world.”

Philippians 4:6-7

⁶Do not be anxious about anything, but in every situation, by prayer and petition, with thanksgiving, present your requests to God. ⁷And the peace of God, which transcends all understanding, will guard your hearts and your minds in Christ Jesus.

May we have the peace that passes all understanding as we lay our troubles in God’s care.

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A friend of mine was telling me about when he was on vacation with his family. He witnessed an actual hurricane. He and his family had been camping when it hit. It was not the most devastating storm of its kind, but nonetheless, it was terrifying. He said what he noticed most was that there were several brick homes on the edge of the campground that didn't look fazed at all. In fact, he remembered that while the people in the campground were huddled together trying to hold on for dear life, trailers creaking and wind howling, these houses didn't even have their lights on. It was as if, he said, they were sound asleep inside.

I was in the third grade when I started having panic attacks. One night I was in the bathtub just before bed. I remember feeling worried and laying down in the water to relax. With my ears under the water I could hear my heartbeat loud in my head. I thought about school the next day and suddenly the tears came. I cried so hard I couldn't breathe. My mom raced upstairs to find out what was wrong. I couldn't tell her. I didn't know. That's the way panic attacks work. I was afraid of things that did not necessarily exist. Storms I could feel but couldn't see or name.

Back then, medical science hadn't yet studied or defined Anxiety Disorders.

I was fortunate at that time to have received my 3rd grade Bible. This powerful book, containing the words of God, brought me tremendous comfort.

Lots of times we let things shake us that really don't have to. Situations that seem overwhelming at first are often something altogether different if we really think about it. We should be able to stay calm enough to step back and see things from the right perspective, but by nature, we default to anxiety – even though God tells us not to be anxious about anything.

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When I was older, the storms actually contained wind and hail and fire. At times, I witnessed the earth swallow up the things I loved whole. These storms came in the form of unexpected illness, job loss, the suffering and death of a loved one, financial issues, major marital problems. The Bible was helpful in getting me through the stuff I couldn't name, but what about this stuff!



The deal is, as long as we live on this earth, we are going to face these things. Jesus tells us “In this world you will have trouble” We’re going to face trouble that comes at us from out of nowhere, and trouble that we bring upon ourselves. And, when these storms hit, bringing fear, uncertainty and desperation, the first and most important thing to do is make sure you’re building your life on a solid foundation. “In this world you will have trouble...” but Jesus goes on to say, “But... take heart. I have overcome the world.”

I talk to a lot of people throughout the week. And even in my own close circle I hear things like, “I really don’t need church, things are going pretty well.” Or, “We really don’t believe in God in a way that you do. And, we don’t do Jesus.” To me, that’s like standing out in a storm without any kind of shelter or protection, or plan.

Whether you realize it or not, you are building your life on some sort of foundation – a foundation that reflects whatever it is you have faith in. Everyone has faith in something.

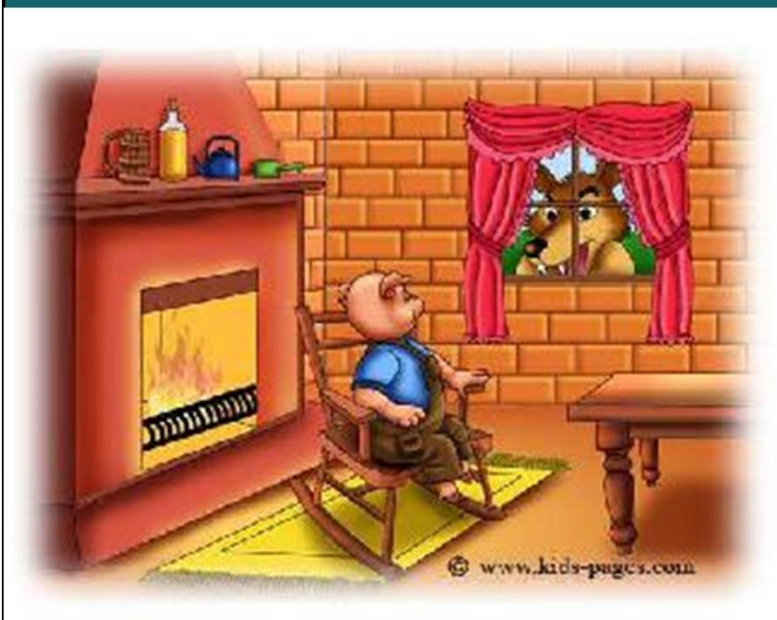
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What do I have faith in?

What kind of foundation
am I building my life on?



When the wind starts
whipping outside
my window,
how do I stay
grounded?



Take a minute to seriously consider the question: What do I have faith in? Yourself? Your spouse? Your job? Your finances? A non-descript higher power? What kind of foundation are you building your life on? When the wind starts whipping outside your window, how do you stay grounded?

Jesus once told a story about two different types of people – one who is constantly blown around by the storms of life and another who is always able to stand, no matter what the circumstances.

When your faith is built on the right foundation, you can face life’s problems – from the smallest worries to the biggest tragedies without being shaken. But, if you put your faith in the wrong place, you will struggle when difficult circumstances come your way and, all too often, collapse completely when the strong storms of life start raging.

My friend, who witnessed hurricane Bob paints a powerful picture of what it’s like to have the right foundation so that one can ride out the storm unscathed. But, what is that right foundation and how do you build upon it?

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The answer is clear and simple. The only foundation worthy of building on, and the only one strong enough to weather life’s storms, is the foundation of faith in God and the foundation of our Messiah, Jesus Christ.

Now, here’s where the rubber meets the road. Either we truly embrace Jesus as who he says he is, or we reject his teachings totally and continue on our way. (Pause) There is no middle ground. Either we choose a rock and build on a solid foundation or we choose a way that will not offer us stability should the storms arise. Or should I say **when**.

Every problem is an opportunity to prove God’s power. Every day we encounter countless golden opportunities, brilliantly disguised as insurmountable problems. Swindoll, One Step Forward, Two Steps Back, p. 35.

Philippians 4:6-7

⁶ Do not be anxious about anything, but in every situation, by prayer and petition, with thanksgiving, present your requests to God. ⁷

And the peace of God, which transcends all understanding, will guard your hearts and your minds in Christ Jesus.

Let’s look at Philippians 4:6-7

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The apostle Paul wrote this... from prison... a man who spent his life persecuting Christians... until he had an encounter with the risen Christ. Paul wrote this to a church that he had started in the town of Philippi. After instructing them not to worry, he goes on to say that when we focus our attention on God... God will give us his peace.

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Have you ever met someone who has it all together? Let me confirm something you may have suspected. They don't. It's 90% façade. None of us has everything under control. Those people who act like they have it all together are hiding under a carefully constructed exterior. Now, there are two kinds of those people. There are the people who scramble to keep up the façade. And there are those who rest their care in the creator of the universe. They do their best, and then they put the rest in the hands of God, which frees them to focus on what needs to be done. These are the people who are not afraid to admit their weakness and rely on God. These are the people who God can give his power to. And... the Bible is filled with these people!

Friends, when we attend church regularly, and raise our children in the faith, we learn these stories, we are strengthened in our faith, God empowers us to move through our troubles and gives us the peace that passes all understanding.

May you find today that God is in control, and may you turn to him in your times of trouble and rest in his peace. Amen!