

Storms and Anxiety

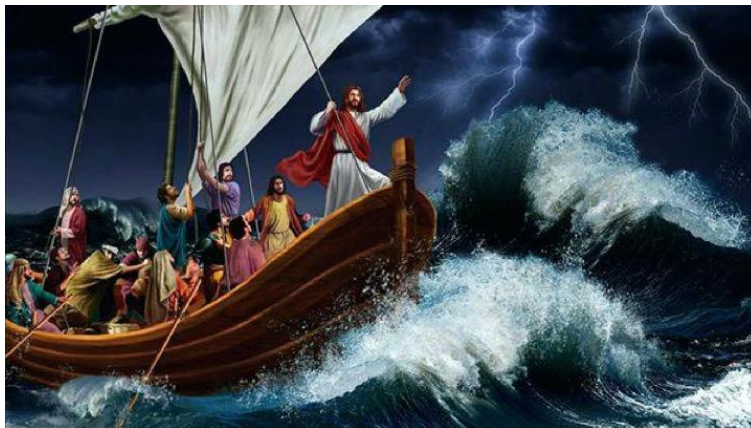
Presented by Tressie Gade on 07-01-2018
At Crossroads United Methodist Church
Waunakee, WI

Scripture:

"Later that day, when evening came, Jesus said to them, "Let's cross over to the other side of the lake." They left the crowd and took him in the boat just as he was. Other boats followed along. Gale-force winds arose, and waves crashed against the boat so that the boat was swamped. But Jesus was in the rear of the boat, sleeping on a pillow. They woke him up and said, "Teacher, don't you care that we're drowning?" He got up and gave orders to the wind, and he said to the lake, "Silence! Be still!" The wind settled down and there was a great calm. Jesus asked them, "Why are you frightened? Don't you have faith yet?" Overcome with awe, they said to each other, "Who then is this? Even the wind and the sea obey him!""



Show of hands, who here likes storms? Ok, hands down, who here is scared of storms? Notice my hand went up for both. I love storms, a good strong rain, maybe some thunder, little lightening, that's all ok. But give me a tornado or snow storm and I am freaked out beyond belief.



Growing up as a United Methodist Preacher's granddaughter I had a lot of favorite bible stories growing up. I would ask to be read to out of my bible story book for bedtime stories. One of my favorites was always Jesus calming the storm.

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See when I was little I was scared of thunderstorms. They were loud and dark and sometimes made the power go out. And I loved that Jesus could make them go away and make them stop with the wave of his hand. I so wanted that power. But I grew up. I grew out of my fear and grew to appreciate the rain and even the storms because I knew that the earth needed them, and God sent them.



In my late teens I was diagnosed with an anxiety disorder. For those of you who don't know what that means, it means that my fight or flight response is on hair trigger and mine tells me run when it senses danger. Things that seem normal to other people are terrifying to me. Family gatherings, crowds, going somewhere new, having a new experience. All these things terrify me and have caused panic attacks. When I feel a panic attack coming on, its like a storm starts raging inside of me. Nothing seems right and I know I need to calm myself down. These are the times I remember my scripture.



When I get worked up I start reciting the 23rd Psalm to myself, sometimes not to myself, sometimes you have to say it out loud. The LORD is my shepherd, I lack nothing. He makes me lie down in green pastures, he leads me beside quiet waters, he refreshes my soul. He guides me along the right paths for his name's sake. Even though I walk through the darkest valley, I will fear no evil, for you are with me; your rod and your staff, they comfort me. Those simple words bring me a sense of peace. Sometimes I can even catch myself before a full attack comes on, in those moments I take a deep breath and I pray. I ask the Lord for a hand on shoulder to help me through, at it helps. I am reminded that I am not going through this alone. Proverbs 3: 5 says Trust in the LORD with all your heart and lean

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not on your own understanding. None of us walk alone. God is there for all of us, he never intended us to go through life solely alone.



It reminds me of that old poem, Footprints in the Sand. Do you know the one I'm talking about?

One night I dreamed a dream. As I was walking along the beach with my Lord. Across the dark sky flashed scenes from my life. For each scene, I noticed two sets of footprints in the sand, one belonging to me and one to my Lord.

After the last scene of my life flashed before me, I looked back at the footprints in the sand. I noticed that at many times along the path of my life, especially at the very lowest and saddest times, there was only one set of footprints. This really troubled me, so I asked the Lord about it.

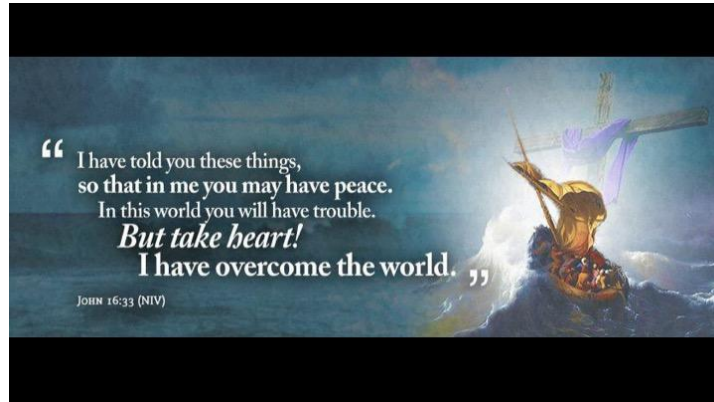
"Lord, you said once I decided to follow you, you'd walk with me all the way. But I noticed that during the saddest and most troublesome times of my life, there was only one set of footprints. I don't understand why, when I needed You the most, you would leave me."

He whispered, "My precious child, I love you and will never leave you. Never, ever, during your trials and testings, when you saw only one set of footprints, it was then that I carried you."

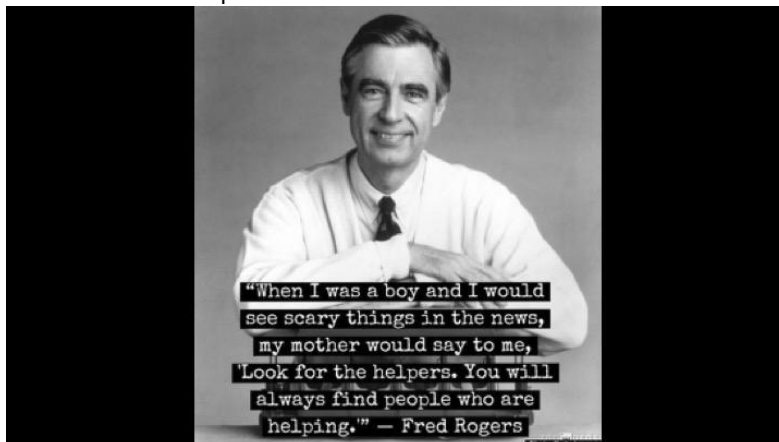


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See God has a plan for us. He made us exactly how he wanted us to be and he laid out the path before us. God gave us choices to make along the way and he knew what would happen with each choice we made. Do any of you remember reading “Choose your own ending books”? You know the ones where you read a couple pages and then you have to make a choice, and if you choose choice A you turn to page 47 and if you choose choice B you turn to page 49. I loved those books!

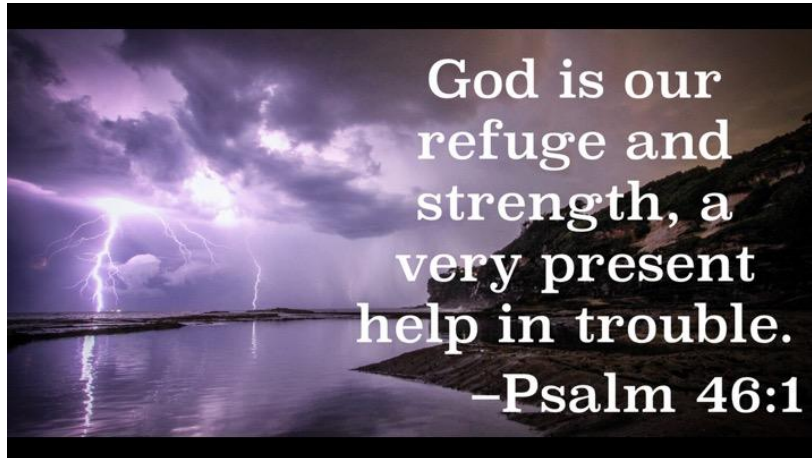


That's how I look at life, God laid out our paths, he gave us forks in the road and we chose which way to go. Does God always make things easy? No, no he does not. Sometimes, some roads just plain suck. But those are the times we need to remember that God is bigger than us. He knows where we're going and all we have to do is trust him. John 16:33 says "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." He reminds us that even if our world is a bit chaotic, we can have inner peace in Him.



God is always there. He's the ultimate helper. One of my favorite television shows growing up was "Mr. Rogers Neighborhood". One of my favorite quotes from Mr. Rogers is "When I was a boy and I would see scary things in the news, my mother would say to me, "Look for the helpers. You will always find people who are helping."

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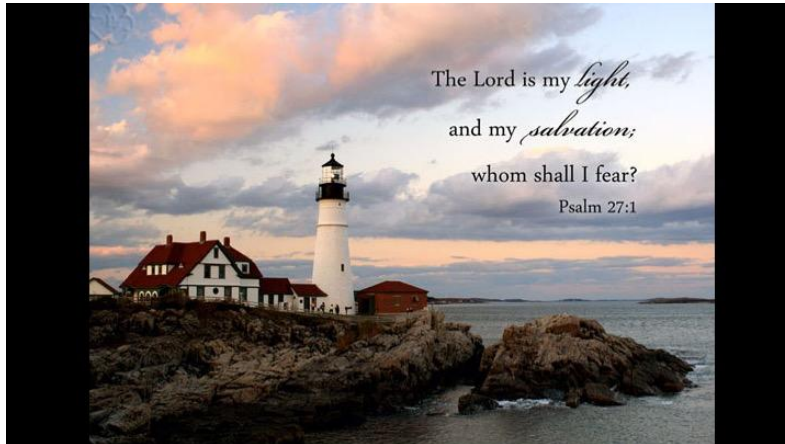


That's what God is. He's there when we need him and he's just waiting for us to ask him for help. Psalm 46:1 says "God is our refuge and strength, an ever-present help in trouble." And Isaiah 41: 10 says "So do not fear, for I am with you; do not be dismayed, for I am your God. I will strengthen you and help you; I will uphold you with my righteous right hand."



God is here to help. And I know that's hard sometimes. Asking for help has never been easy for me. Sometimes I feel like others will think less of me, even when I know they won't and sometimes I don't want to burden people, even when they offer to help. Asking for help is hard, but that's exactly what God wants us to do. Did you ever have a teacher in school who you absolutely loved. Mine was Mrs. Jones. You could tell she loved teaching and wanted her students to succeed. She was always there and took time to explain things if you weren't getting it. If you needed help, all you ever had to do was ask. God is like that great teacher you had, he wants you to succeed and he wants to help you, all you need to do is ask.

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So in this chaotic world, when sometimes nothing makes sense anymore. When we see news stories that will rip out your heart and everything seems wrong. When you start to worry or become anxious. Breathe. Take a second and thank God for what you have and ask him for help. Ask for a hand on your shoulder or an answer in your heart. Remember that we are never all alone, he is there in our corner waiting for us to ask for his help. Remember Psalm 27:1 "The Lord is my light and my salvation – whom shall I fear? The Lord is the stronghold of my life – of whom shall I be afraid?" Sometimes the world is a scary place full of storms and chaos, but God, he calms the storms.