

Sermon Based Questions for Growth Group Discussion

A Table on the Water – Keeping Steady When You Wobble

Psalm 107 and Acts 27:23-32

This message sought to provide perspective and orientation in a season of transition at Pacific when we move from a time of well-established leadership to a time of new leadership. Such a change creates a time of uncertainty as we all ask – What is next? I likened it to the wobble one experiences on the water when the environment changes up. How do we keep steady when the wobble threatens to chuck us into the water? Walter Brueggemann, a favorite Bible scholar of mine, describes three types of psalms: Psalms of orientation (steadiness), Psalms of dis-orientation (wobble), and Psalms of new orientation (new steadiness). Psalm 107, as I approached it, is one that identifies the movement from orientation to new orientation with wobbles in between. To that point, the Psalm recounts four different kinds of wobblers: 1) Wandering Wobblers; 2) Wretched Wobblers; 3) Weak Wobblers; 4) Water Wobblers. Specifically, I focused the sermon's reflections on #4 and linked it to the story of Paul's Shipwreck experience where in the midst of the darkness he set a table (eucharist) on the water – gave thanks to God, broke bread, and nourished the 276 people on board before the ship crashed upon the shore.

Some Questions to Get You Talking and Thinking (not necessarily in order)

1. Describe a time, perhaps recent, when you wobbled (A good icebreaker). Do one of the four types of wobblers in Psalm 107 relate to your wobble story? If so, how? (See slide 9)
 - a. Wandering Wobblers (4-9) – people without a home and lost looking for one
 - b. Wretched Wobblers (10-16) – people trapped in a prison without help and hope
 - c. Weak Wobblers (17-22) – people disabled severely by sickness or some life stealing condition
 - d. Water Wobblers (23-32) – people who tackle the world but are tackled by it
2. I suggested (slide 10) that Pacific's story mirrors the water wobble story of verses 23-32. What do you think?
3. I argued that Paul (slide 12) set up a table on the water (eucharist) as a way of comforting those on the ship to give thanks and to be nourished for the very unnerving time of the coming crash. Compare what Paul does in Acts 27:33-38 with two other occurrences when the table was set in Acts – 2:46 & 20:11. In the Greek, words used are mirrored in all three texts. I suggested that the story of Paul and the shipwreck is a image of the church in the world. What do you think? What are the lessons and reflections you draw from this image of the church, if you agree?
4. With the help of a few paddling illustrations of my own, I offered a few reflections. Which reflection or illustration encouraged you in your wobbling?
 - a. Keep steady by looking forward and paddling deep
 - b. Keep steady by regular practice
 - c. Keep steady by eating when you wobble
5. A key point in the message is about Giving Thanks when you wobble. It is what Psalm 107 recommends (see verses 1-4). It is what Paul does on the ship. How can giving thanks help you to deal with the wobbles that life throws at you?
6. It so happened that the power went out twice during the sermon at two key points of the message. The description of Pacific's story and its tribulation and when Paul set the table on the water in the dark (that is the way I remembered it). What do you think God was saying to us in that moment?