

7/26/26
9th Sunday after Pentecost
For Group Meetings from July 19th – July 25th

OUR MISSION: As a missional congregation we *celebrate* Christ's presence, *invite* people into a growing relationship with Jesus, and *equip* them to *serve* in a broken world.

Prayer of the Day: God of hope, you remain with us through every storm and lead us safely by your grace. Give us courage in times of uncertainty, hearts that welcome strangers with kindness, and confidence to proclaim the good news of Jesus Christ wherever you lead us; through the same Jesus Christ, our Savior and Lord. **Amen.**

BIBLICAL EQUIPPING TOGETHER:

Share: How did last week's scripture (Acts 20:17-38) work in your life this week?

Mission:

- What was most satisfying about your ministry last week?
- Where do you see God at work?
- How did you participate in God's missional activity?
- How did inviting go last Sunday?

Hear: Acts 27:21-26, 39-44; 28:1-10, 30-31

Explore Questions: (Use these or develop your own.)

1. What message does Paul share with the sailors after many days at sea?
2. What happens when the ship finally reaches land?
3. What does the text emphasize about Paul's ministry while he is under house arrest?

Connect Questions: (Use these or develop your own.)

1. What promise of God helps you keep going when life feels uncertain?
2. Share a time in your life when has an interruption or disappointment become a gift.
3. When have you experienced unexpected kindness from a stranger?

Memorize this verse: "So keep up your courage, for I have faith in God that it will be exactly as I have been told." (Acts 27:25) Where have you witnessed or experienced courage recently?

BIBLICAL EQUIPPING APART:

Obey: During this week follow through on your intentions.

Meditate: Meditate on Psalm 107:23-32. How does this speak into your life?

Reflect: What have I learned in my week of living with this text? What can I share with my group when we next meet?

Notes for ChristCare leaders:

There is a temptation when we read stories like Paul's shipwreck to turn them into simple lessons about having enough faith. If we just trust God more, then the storms will pass more quickly, the dangers will disappear, and everything will work out. But Acts will not allow us to read it that way. Paul does not receive a promise that the storm will go away. He receives a promise that God has not abandoned them in the middle of it. That distinction matters. The storm is real. The fear is real. The loss of control is real. The sailors have tried everything they know to survive, and eventually they reach the point where they have no more options. It is precisely there that Paul speaks: "Keep up your courage, for I have faith in God that it will be exactly as I have been told." Paul's confidence is not rooted in his ability to predict the future or control the outcome. It is rooted in the character of God.

That may be one of the most difficult lessons of faith. We often want God to remove uncertainty. We want God to give us a clear path, a guarantee, or some assurance that the things we fear will never happen. But much of Scripture tells a different story. Faith is not the absence of storms. Faith is trusting that God is present even when the storm remains. And notice what happens next. Paul's faith does not make him escape the shipwreck. The ship still runs aground. Everyone still has to swim for shore. God's promise does not eliminate the struggle. It carries them through it. Then, once they arrive on Malta, Luke introduces another surprising part of the story. The people who receive Paul are not fellow believers. They are strangers who offer hospitality. They build a fire, welcome the survivors, and care for them.

This is a reminder that God's work is not limited to the places where we expect to find it. Paul arrives as a prisoner, but he becomes a gift to the people of Malta. And before that happens, the people of Malta become a gift to him.

The story resists the idea that ministry only happens when we are in control or when circumstances are ideal. Paul's ministry continues in a shipwreck, on an unfamiliar island, and eventually while under house arrest in Rome. The circumstances change, but the calling remains. That is why the ending of Acts is so interesting. Luke does not give us the ending we might expect. Paul is not released. The conflict is not resolved. The church does not suddenly enter a season of ease. Instead, Acts ends with Paul proclaiming the kingdom of God and teaching about Jesus "with all boldness and without hindrance." The gospel continues. Perhaps that is the point Luke wants us to remember. The mission of God does not depend on perfect circumstances, successful outcomes, or the absence of hardship. God's work continues through people who find themselves in complicated, uncertain, and sometimes difficult places. Most of us will not face a literal shipwreck. But all of us know what it means to lose our sense of control. To encounter circumstances we did not choose and cannot fix. This text reminds us that the presence of God is not measured by how smooth the journey is. The question is not whether storms will come. The question is whether, in the middle of them, we can still hear the promise Paul heard: God is faithful. Keep courage. The story is not over.

Thanks be to God,

Pastor Thadd (tbook@desertcross.org)

Traditional version:

Our Father who art in heaven,
hallowed be thy name; thy kingdom come,
thy will be done on earth as it is in heaven.
Give us this day our daily bread.
And forgive us our trespasses,
As we forgive those who trespass against us.
And lead us not into temptation; but deliver us
from evil. For thine is the kingdom, the power,
And the glory, forever and ever. Amen

Contemporary version:

Our Father in heaven,
hallowed be your name, your kingdom come,
your will be done on earth as in heaven.
Give us today our daily bread.
Forgive us our sins as we forgive those
Who sin against us. Save us from the time of trial
And deliver us from evil. For the kingdom, the
power, and the glory are yours,
Now and forever. Amen