

克利夫蘭華人教會

Cleveland Chinese Christian Church

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Youth Pastor Letter

September 2017

Dear Church Family,

Have you ever heard a heart-warming story?

Heart-warming stories inspire us to better living, encourage action, and give us a pep talk to try harder. But let's be honest, while these kinds of encouragement can be nice in the moment, they are short lived and can also be quite condemning. When we measure ourselves to a heart-warming or inspiring story, we can often feel inadequate and like we can't measure up.

When we try harder, we often end up frustrated and overwhelmed by our circumstances.

What can we do?

Jesus offers us something totally different.

In Mark 6:45-52, Jesus tells the disciples to go in a boat ahead of him while he goes up on a mountain to pray. The disciples encounter adverse conditions – “the wind was against them” – and Jesus notices this. He walks on the water to the boat, and it scares the disciples. Mark writes, “But immediately he spoke to them and said, ‘Take heart; it is I. Do not be afraid.’ And he got into the boat with them, and the wind ceased.” (Mark 6:50)

In this story, Jesus moves to his disciples who are distressed. When He gets there, He doesn't say that the disciples need to be better sailors or that they need to try harder. He simply comes and says, “Take Heart; it is I. Do not be afraid.”

In the same way, Jesus moves towards us in our various circumstances. When I am overwhelmed and short on my good deeds, Jesus comes to me and makes the first move. He came to the earth to save His people. He approached a weary, frightened world, and presented himself on our behalf. His is a welcome respite and surrender when the world around seems to only ask us to be better, stronger, and do more. When my strivings cease in light of the deep love of Christ, I can find the rest for which I long.

Circumstances will continue to present themselves as too much to handle but in those moments you can, “Turn your eyes upon Jesus, look full in his wonderful face. And the things of earth will grow strangely dim in the light of his glory and grace.” Just as the disciples gazed upon Christ walking on the water, we can gaze upon Christ and his life given for us, and the storm that we are in, the season of weariness, does indeed grow strangely dim.

As always, if you have any questions, comments, or prayer requests, please contact me at jmlilley@clevelandccc.org.

In Christ,
Pastor Jonathan Lilley