

Monday, June 1, 2009

The graphic for our summer 2009 theme “Anchors for the Soul” is powerful isn’t it? Raging seas; ominous, dark clouds overhead; outstretched arms and head thrown back in desperation...have you ever been there? This summer our aim is to learn how to navigate the stormy seas of life with the resources God has provided and develop our ability to use those resources to their God designed maximum potential.

If you are reading the Bible with us this summer, today we are in John’s Gospel, chapter 8. Notice a great contrast: *“I am the light of the world, whoever follows Me will not walk in darkness”* (John 8:12) // *“He (the devil) was a murderer from the beginning, not holding to the truth, for there is no truth in him. When he lies, he speaks his native language, for he is a liar and the father of lies.”* (John 8:44) // *“If you hold to My teaching, you are really My disciples. Then you will know the truth and the truth will set you free.”* (John 8:31,32) Just as a sailor uses maps, charts, a compass, depth finder and many other tools to navigate the waters, especially in stormy times...so each of us must find and wisely use those navigational aids that can help us in this journey of life. So which are the ones you have thus far found most reliable in your journey? Be careful...deception, deceit, entrapment, manipulation are to be found at every turn in life.

Jesus Christ Himself is THE premiere anchor in life. Read again Hebrews 1:1-3. Can you make a list here of the specific claims about Jesus in these few verses?

- God has spoken to humanity through Jesus Christ
- The universe was created by Jesus’ direct involvement.

Now add John 1:1-3,14 and Colossians 1:15; 2:9 to Hebrews 1:1-3. Do you see how they fit together? In all of life, the most foundational, fundamental, critical decision EVERY person must make is this: “WHO is Jesus Christ to me”? It’s more than a simple statement of information, it’s a declaration that defines the core of your life orientation.

Tuesday, June 2, 2009

Have you learned to read the summer sky? Can you feel the change in humidity or barometric pressure? Do you detect wind change, the increasing intensity of clouds and their darkening color as rain approaches? While good sailors are grateful for radar, radio weather reports, etc., they rely primarily upon their experience at learning to read the skies. How is your ability to detect an approaching “life storm”? A business problem, a relational conflict, a strong temptation in your area of weakness, a commitment you can’t keep, a deadline you can’t meet, etc. Look back...what’s your pattern in such “storm approaching” times? Do you look for a place to hide / deny it and pretend it isn’t happening / deal with it head on / get angry and start blaming / start praying asking God for His help? What’s your most reliable anchor in the storms of your life?

Look closely at the story of a blind man in John 9. Jesus’ involvement in your life is supposed to make life better, right? What happened to this man? A saliva mud pack on his face / public march to one of the filthy public bathing pools to wash / conflict with the religious leaders and even his own parents... might it have been better to just remain blind?

Friends, John 9:22 is happening right now in many places around the world. For people who choose to acknowledge Jesus to be who He claims to be...God in human flesh; Savior and Lord; resurrected and ascended Sovereign reigning over all... such statements while truthful and factual, are viewed as preposterous by many and when you live your life in celebration of those statements, you’ll find yourself in storms quite often, for the majority of the world discounts it.

A “keel” is vital to a sailboat. It’s that fin shaped thing under the boat which keeps it stable especially in strong winds. Have you discovered, the more you know Jesus Christ for who He really is; the more you understand the truths of God’s Word about Jesus; the more you experience Jesus in your daily life... the more stable you are in the storms of life?

Wednesday, June 3, 2009

If you ever have opportunity to spend time around sheep... take the time, and learn all you can, for if there is any animal that seems to epitomize us humans, it’s sheep! In John 10 Jesus speaks a great deal about sheep, their sheep pens, their shepherds and the relationship between shepherd and sheep. I urge you to read it carefully and see yourself as a sheep, and Jesus as your genuine shepherd. Here are a few questions for you:

- What are some of the most valuable roles of the shepherd as the one responsible for the sheep? Remember they are among the most vulnerable, defenseless animals alive!
- What are some of the significant aspects of the relationship between the shepherd and his sheep? (voice recognition / each sheep has a name /leading from ahead/contentment without fear, etc.)
- To what extreme will a good shepherd go in caring for his flock of precious sheep?

Storms are fearful things for sheep. Wind, rain, lightning, thunder, hail and more can bring sheep to near paralysis in fear. The wise shepherd anticipates a terrible storm and leads them to the best shelter available, wherever they may be. Regardless of the quality of the shelter, do you know what is most comforting to the sheep in a storm? The presence of the Shepherd among the sheep, his calming voice speaking to them, and his comforting touch as he walks carefully among them. Do you see Jesus’ offer to you and me in John 10 as our “good shepherd”? I’m sure you see the progression. Jesus can only be our close, reliable friend as a Shepherd, if we have already worked through WHO He is authentically and WHO I will invite Him to be in my life. This level of relationship is developed slowly over time with trust and truth! Get it?

Thursday, June 4, 2009

Why are storms so frightening? Because they are the unleashing of uncontrollable power. We can't stop or control the winds of a tornado, hurricane or even strong summer thunderstorm. We can't stop the rain and we struggle to control flooding. We can't predict the next lightning flash nor control its dangerous power. Storms are among God's great demonstrations of His power, and that's one reason I love storms!

Today we are reading John 11, one of the great power demonstrations of Jesus' earthly life. Perhaps you've noticed a crescendo of miracles in John's Gospel? Water turned to wine quietly and without a verbal word or touch (John 2). A sick son healed from many miles away (John 4). A 38 year cripple raised to health and walking (John 5). 5000 men fed with one little boy's lunch and both Jesus and Peter walk on the waves of stormy Lake Galilee (John 6). A man born blind receives his sight (John 9) and now in Bethany (John 11), a man dead several days, is raised to life by Jesus Christ! Do you see the progression and the scope of miracles? Do you understand their purpose was to demonstrate Jesus' power and in so doing authenticate His identity as God incarnate (John 14:10,11), and offer confident comfort to His followers!

Colossians 1:16,17, John 1:3 are great declarations of Jesus' creative and sustaining power over all things. Psalm 139, Isaiah 46 are further statements of God's power in creating every human life. Mark 5 is a great example of Jesus' supremacy over demonic forces. Note Col. 1:18 "so that in all things He might have the supremacy"! It was in Jesus' death, resurrection and ascension that He, as "first fruits from the dead", returned to His Sovereign reign even more powerful than before since He had fully defeated Satan, sin and death and thus provided full atonement redemption for any and all repentant human being!! (did you get that?)

What is your most significant measurement of Jesus' power? How has His power been experienced in your storms?

Friday, June 5, 2009

We're now two weeks into the summer of 2009. Have you formed a "tether team" with two others for the summer and have you contacted each of them at least once per week? If not, do so today...no good sailor would ever sail alone, especially in stormy weather. Have you started reading "The Dangerous Duty of Delight", our summer book by John Piper? Great isn't it? Are you finding freedom to ENJOY being a Christian? Come on friends, celebrate life!

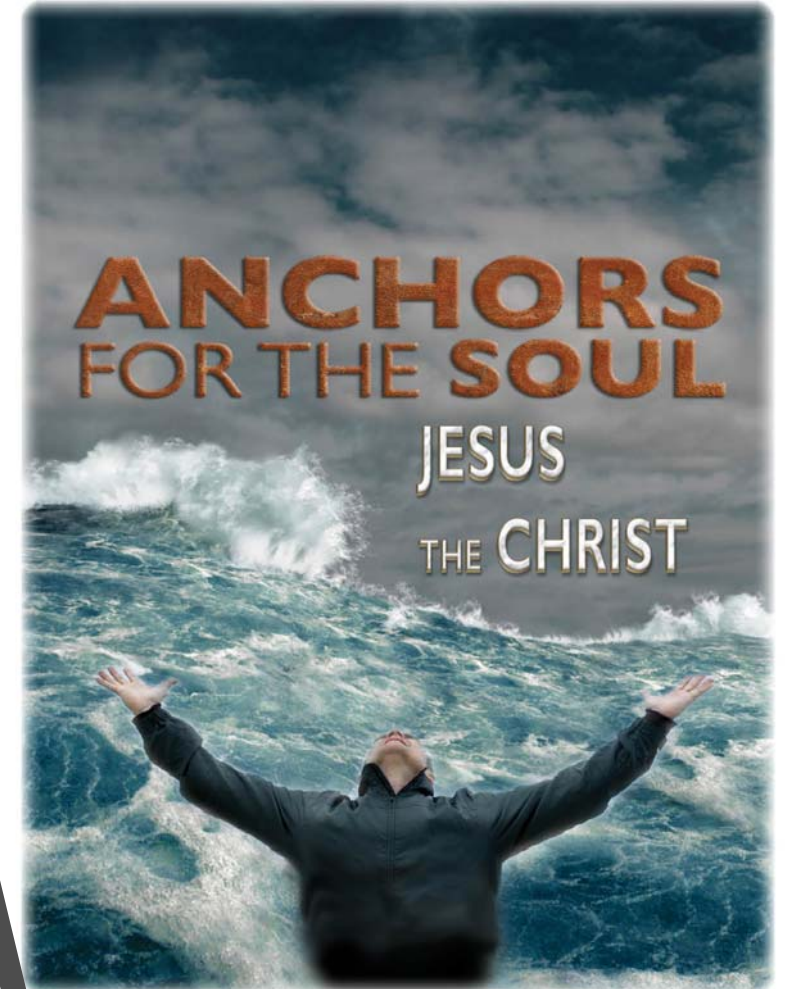
Today, consider Jesus Christ as the ultimate "relevant" touch of God into your stormy world. There is NOTHING Jesus doesn't understand or know about you (Psalm 139). There is NO PLACE you can ever be that Jesus can't see you, hear you or in fact isn't there with you by His Holy Spirit! NO TIME in your life journey is confusing to God, nor does He wring His hands with anxiety about what to do next to help you walk the journey of life!

This weekend you'll be reading John 12-14, great chapters of truthful hope! Jesus was preparing for His final days of suffering and death on our behalf. He prepared His friends with words of great hope and truth. I urge you to carefully work through those chapters. Do you see His efforts to clarify WHO He is; WHY He had come to earth from His heavenly reign; WHAT relationship He was offering every person; WHAT His death and resurrection would accomplish; and HOW He would make eternal life available to all? Do you see the storm raging for Jesus, as He announced one of those around His table would betray Him to death, and another would deny he even knew Jesus!?

Could I invite you to again read Hebrews 1:1-3; John 1:1-14 and Colossians 1, and then in concert with all you've considered this week about Jesus Christ...may I urge you to write a paragraph which articulates as clearly as you can, your strong convictions about WHY Jesus is your strongest anchor in any storm of life? I urge you to write it in your Summer journal, and contact your "summer partners" and tell them.


Pastor Doug Anderson

June 1 - 5, 2009



A Disciplemaking Tool
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