

WEEKLY DEVOTION – Tuesday, September 10, 2024
Pastor Bruce Kischnick, Grace Lutheran Church, New Albany, IN

“Be Thankful for Little Problems”

READING: II Cor.6:3-10 – We put no stumbling block in anyone’s path, so that our ministry will not be discredited. Rather, as servants of God we commend ourselves in every way: in great endurance; in troubles, hardships, and distresses; in beatings, imprisonments and riots; in hard work, sleepless nights and hunger; in purity, understanding, patience and kindness; in the Holy Spirit and in sincere love; in truthful speech and in the power of God; with weapons of righteousness in the right hand and in the left; through glory and dishonor, bad report and good report; genuine, yet regarded as impostors; known, yet regarded as unknown; dying, and yet we live on; beaten, yet not killed; sorrowful, yet always rejoicing; poor, yet making many rich; having nothing, and yet possessing everything.

We had a chipmuck problem! One of those cute little varmints found its way into our cabin at the lake in Canada. We came back one afternoon, and when I walked into the cabin, I saw something scurry around the front room. I saw it was a chipmunk, and he was trying to get out through the picture windows but having no luck. He ran back and forth for a moment, then hightailed it past me into the kitchen and disappeared behind the stove. Later we discovered a big hole in the lower backside of a bag of salted-in-the-shell peanuts. He must have been running in and out all afternoon with his cheeks stuffed with winter provisions.

The following day, which was rainy and rather cool, my brother and his boat partner came in before us to get the fireplace going for the rest of us. Once they had the fire going, they were sitting at the table drinking some Lutheran lemonade when the chipmunk reappeared from behind the stove. He gave them a quick look-over, then spying a peanut, he picked it up with his paws, sat on his haunches, and ate the peanut all the while looking at the two men as though to say, “How’s things with you guys?”

There were mouse traps set in various places, but we never caught the little bugger. My brother saw him actually stick his head between the jaws of the trap to lift a peanut set there as bait. He did it with the care of a surgeon and got away clean.

On our last evening of fishing we stayed out on the lake late. We got back to the dock around 8:45 or so. The next day one of the young college kids that worked on the staff showed us a video he had taken from the boat dock about 8:00 that last night. In the distance you see something black moving on the beach. Then the camera zooms in and you see a 300-pound black bear walking on the beach not 40 yards from our cabin’s front porch. We could have seen his ears from the porch as he moved along below the cut-bank. We decided right there and then that our little problems with the chipmunk were literally small peanuts compared to returning to the cabin only to find a 300-pound bruin in our cabin. Thank God for little problems!

St. Paul in our lesson from his Second Letter to the Corinthians gives quite a list of problems and troubles that he and his fellow evangelists encountered on his missionary journeys. It’s not the only place where he makes such a list. I think he wanted his readers to know just how much he valued their salvation and their faith in Christ Jesus. He was willing to endure all things if it meant he could see them grow in faith and service.

In particular I get a kick out of the last seven items. He says, “...genuine, yet regarded as impostors; known, yet regarded as unknown; dying, and yet we live on; beaten, and yet no killed; sorrowful, yet always

rejoicing; poor, yet making many rich; having nothing, yet possessing everything.” None of those things can be regarded as good, but each of those things could have been worse. None of those things was to be enjoyed, yet each of those things brought blessing to others. None of those things were sought after, but when each of those things came their way, they made the most of them.

There are strains of Christianity who try to teach people that if they just have enough faith, God is going to rain down physical, economic, medical, or relational blessings without number upon them. I say, show me where Jesus promises that in this life we will be without trouble? In fact he says that for his sake we will most definitely have troubles come to visit us. But if you and I trust that God can and will produce good fruit from our steadfastness and our endurance and our faith, then we can thank God for the little problems and thank him that the bigger ones have not befallen us.

In Chapter 4 of this same book Paul says this, “For our light and momentary troubles are achieving for us an eternal glory that far outweighs them all. So we fix our eyes not on what is seen, but on what is unseen. For what is seen is temporary, but what is unseen is eternal.”

“Light and momentary” – our problems don’t always feel so light and momentary, but when we compare them to what we will experience in heaven, they will fade to nothing in that day. So you and I can thank God for the little problems. We can thank him that they are little. We can thank him that they will not last. And we can thank him that his Son has already taken care of our greatest problems: sin, death, and condemnation. Those things he has already undone. Thanks be to God through our Lord Jesus Christ. Amen.

PRAYER:

ANNOUNCEMENTS:

- 1) Turns out we will not be taking an excursion to the professional Women’s Soccer match later this month. No one took up our offer! Hmmm!
- 2) **SUNDAY, SEPTEMBER 15** is a **BIG DAY!** We will celebrate our 50th year in our Sanctuary with a **CONGREGATIONAL PICTURE** to be taken between the services. Want every possible member to be there around 9:15. After late service the Elders will serve their BBQ. Come!