

New St. James Presbyterian Church, London, Ontario
Sunday, September 16, 2018
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When Your Confidence is Shattered

Text: “This is my command. Be strong and of a good courage. Do not be fearful or dismayed, for the Lord your God is with you, wherever you go.” Underneath everything we do are ‘the Everlasting Arms’ of God

Woody Allan once said: “Confidence is what you have before you understand the problem.”

There is a joke about Bill who was an enormously confident young man. He believed he could talk his way out of anything. One day he was pulled over for speeding. Knowing that he was ‘dead in the water’ he tried this creative defence.

The officer said: “May I see your driver’s license please?”

Bill said: “I don't have one.”

Officer: “May I see the registration for this vehicle?”

Bill said: “It's not my car. I stole it.”

Officer: The car is stolen?

Bill: “Yes - but come to think of it, I think I saw the registration in the glove box when I was putting my gun in there.”

Officer: “There's a gun in the glove box?”

Bill: “Yes. That's where I put it. I need it to guard the cocaine in the trunk.”

Officer: “There's a cocaine in the trunk?”

Bill, “yes sir!”

Hearing all of this, the officer immediately called for back up. Soon, young Bill’s car is surrounded by police and to handle the tense situation, a police **inspector** approaches Bill.

Inspector: “Sir, can I see your license?”

Bill: “Sure. Here it is.” (It was valid).

Inspector: “Who's car is this?”

Isaac: “It's mine, inspector. Here's the registration papers to prove it.” (Also, valid).

Inspector: “Could you open your glove box, so I can see if there's a gun in it?”

Bill said: “Yes, sir, but there's no gun in it.” [Sure enough, there wasn't].

Inspector: “Would you mind opening your trunk? I was told you said there's a stash of cocaine in it.”

Bill said: “No problem, its empty.” The trunk is opened, and it is searched and found to be empty.

Inspector: “I don't understand it. The officer who stopped you, said you told him you didn't have a license, stole the car, had a gun in the glove box, and that there was cocaine in the trunk.

Bill: Really? I'll bet he told you that I was speeding as well?

Several years ago, I was in Florence Italy. I had come to see Michael Angelo’s famous sculpture of David. I was surprised at its size. It was much larger than I expected. When I got up close I was amazed by its immense power. The statue radiated confidence from every pore, muscle and vein. The whole sculpture captured timelessly in marble the word CONFIDENCE- a readiness for any eventuality and ultimate fearless strength. This was the David, fearless before Goliath of Gath. This was the David, who was able to wrestle lions to protect his sheep. This was the David of possibilities who once said: “By my God I can leap over any wall!”

In the first Testament lesson we came across David sending emissaries to Hanun, who was the son of Nahash, who had been a friend to David.

Imagine for a moment what it would have been like to be one of David's emissaries, to be deliberately misconstrued and then humiliated. As an emissary, you set out in good faith, with the highest possible motives of friendliness and loyalty in your heart, fortified with David's sincere condolences for Hanun on the loss of his father, who was David's friend.

And then **NOBODY BELIEVES YOU!** Not only that you are seized, your clothes are cut in half exposing your buttocks and your beard is half shaved off so that you look absolutely ridiculous!

Scripture describes these men as "Deeply humiliated." They don't want to be seen like this.

What does David do?

David, despite being a man of war, is also a deeply sensitive person. He wrote "The Lord is my Shepherd" which is such a beloved sensitive psalm. He has this quality of sensitivity in spades. What does this immensely confident man do for his humiliated men? Does he tell them to tough it out? Does he parade them before the people to show how they had been humiliated?

No. David immediately deals with their problem of lost confidence. He orders them to wait in Jericho and not to return until their beards have grown again.

Have you ever had your confidence undermined? Perhaps it happened early in school in a particular subject you had difficulty with. Or perhaps you decided to go back to school after a long period away only to discover, a very steep learning curve in a subject you thought you could handle.

Perhaps for you it happened in job retraining when you were faced with a new computer program that you had to learn, and you were totally daunted. Perhaps it took place when you took a new job that was overwhelming with its demands and you just couldn't cope. Perhaps it occurred in performance when you forgot your words in a song or a speech. (they say that the greatest fear people have in this world is not death but public speaking. And the second greatest fear is to die while doing it!)

Maurice Chevalier, star of stage and screen, had a confidence problem. One night he began to lose his place and replied with lines from the third act when he was only in the second. The experienced actors all covered for him.

The next night the same thing happened. He began to suffer nightmares of fright. He hesitated, stammered and then came attacks of vertigo. Eventually he had a nervous breakdown. His confidence was totally shattered. Under the advice of his doctor he walked away from the stage and screen and headed for the country and long walks, seeking peace in nature.

Eventually his doctor declared him cured, but his confidence was still shattered. Then his doctor said to him, "Don't be afraid to be afraid!"

Chevalier did make a comeback, but it was agony for him. Each performance was a major strain. Finally, he was back in Paris and the encores went on so long that he physically could do no more. He was back!!

Chevalier said: "If we wait for the perfect moment when all is safe and assured, it may never arrive."

He had learned the truth that Mark Twain had arrived at: "Courage" said Twain "is resistance to fear, mastery of fear-not absence of fear."

It is very important in terms of self confidence to **do** our fears...stare them right in the face and just do it as Nike suggests. 😊

Trades of good players can upset fans.

Steve Francis was drafted by the Vancouver Grizzlies. He didn't want to play for them and so took a contract with the Houston rockets. When he came to play for Houston in Vancouver, the crowd began to chant:

“Francis sucks!” Every time he got the ball he was booed! Nasty signs were hoisted in the stands. When Antoine Carr sent Francis crashing to the floor in a wrestling match for the ball, there was a standing ovation.

How did Francis handle all this negative energy?

Francis played the best game of his career. He finished with 23 points, ten assists and nine rebounds. What did he say after the game?

“When you are up against the odds, that is when good players and good people do their best. I played Steve Francis basketball today!”

Our text today is all about confidence building: “Be strong and of a good courage!”

I have come to believe from personal experience that when our confidence is shattered, if we listen, from deep inside of us can come the voice of God. We can hear on the intuitive level the voice of God saying: “Be strong and of a good courage. Do not be fearful and dismayed, for I am with you, wherever you go!”

“Fear not” as a phrase is heard frequently in the Bible. It is usually the first thing an angel says in an encounter. These were the words Mary heard when Jesus was conceived by the power of the holy Spirit. Zechariah heard them at the Advent of John the Baptist: “The Lord is with you, fear not!”

The last words Jesus spoke to his followers before he left the planet were “Fear not! I am with you always until the end of time.”

When you and I are discouraged we need to be able to recognize this voice of God within us. We will know this voice, whether it comes from a friend, from a loved one or from our inner source. How will we recognize this voice?

It will always counsel courage! It will always affirm us right where we are. It will be the wind beneath our wings!

Will you listen for the voice of God for you today?

Let me tell you about Freddie. Freddie was up for adoption. He was a beautiful baby with dark curly hair. But when it came to adoption, Freddie was always rejected because he had no arms.

Adoptive parents would always say, “If a baby develops a problem after we get him, that is a risk we will take just like any other parents. But to deliberately pick a baby with a problem, that's a different matter all together!”

So, the months dragged on. Other babies were adopted, Freddie was not. It got to be over a year until finally the social worker didn't bring little Freddie out to be rejected one more time.

Then one day a trucker and his wife came to the agency. They had been married for 18 years- no baby. They had repeatably been told by adoptive agencies that they were too old to adopt, their apartment was too small, they didn't make enough money.

This day they had come for the last time. Slowly, the placement worker assessed them.

“Would it be long before we could adopt?” they asked.

There were no children immediately available and yet the placement worker had a picture of Freddie in her purse. The trucker's wife said, “We've got a lot of love. We've saved up a lot of that!”

Cautiously the placement worker got out a picture of Freddie from her purse. She said, ‘ He's a wonderful little boy,” she said, “But he was born without arms.”

SILENCE

And then the trucker and his wife began to talk to each other: “ A boy is a boy. He can learn to use his head and his feet...”

The placement worker glanced back and forth between them as they talked. They looked up suddenly.

“When could we have him?”

“You think you might want him?” said the social worker.

The wife looked at the social worker “Might?” she said. ‘Might!?!’

“We want him!” said her husband.

It took till Christmas to arrange it all, but the night came.

The social worker carried little Freddie downstairs, put him on his feet and opened the door where the trucker and his wife waited. They said, “Merry Christmas!”

Little Freddie stood there very uncertain, gazing at the two people before him.

But they drank him in!

The trucker got down on one knee and said “Freddie! Come here to Daddy!”

Freddie looked back at the social worker and then walked slowly towards them. **They reached out their arms and gathered him in!**

So, it is with God.

When, like Freddie, our confidence is shattered, all it takes is one small step of faith towards God and the Everlasting Arms gather us in!