**“It’s Time”**

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Job 38:1-11

2 Corinthians 6:1-13

Mark 4:35-41

4th Sunday after Pentecost

“God says, ’In a favorable time I listened to you, and in a day of salvation I have helped you.’ Behold, **now is** the favorable time; behold, **now is** the day of salvation.”

Grace to you and peace from God, our Father, and from our Lord, and Savior, Jesus Christ.

Bridge

The Church at Corinth had (I think) a **North American problem**. I can’t speak for other countries, but **Americans** are **apathetic about the Lord God**. They, either, get **in “moods” of energy that they think are His direction** or **stay “shallow” on what He expects or teaches of Himself**. They decide upon a **“good enough” level of discipleship** **… and assume God’s OK with momentary “best efforts”**. **That (I think)** is an American apathy toward God. Apathy that breeds its own problems.

Now, don’t get me wrong, we **strive consistantly** for **successes at work**. We **celebrate ecstatically** **sports teams and games** … we even **struggle and exert tremendous effort** **to champion our kids in club sports**. We **love** **our mothers** and **apple pie**, and **say that** **blood is thicker than water, so make family the “big thing”**. **Patriotism** is the **stuff of movies and fireworks shows**. We **stand in** **honoring tears** for **the National Anthem**. We **hold our hands upon our hearts** **because of the preciousness of what our flag represents**. We’re **religious** about **some things**, **freedom and the pursuit of happiness we’ll** **fight for**, but of something beyond sentiment or a moment, we’re a people generally **complacent and ho-hum**. [Any **other descriptions of “apathy” (a key word today)**?] ….

The Corinthian people were **like that also**. Of all the things that could **get them excited**, the **ones that we have, they had**. So Paul dealt with a **very-American culture** … and he did-so before there was even an America. Paul wrote 2 letters to the **American them** who (I think) are pretty much **us** after he got to know this people really well … so (I think) he’s talking also to us.

And, interestingly, Corinth (and North America) were also **just like** the Southern kingdom of Israel … Judah. Paul drew the **same historic comparison (in his sermon) that I’m doing in mine**. 2 Corinthians 6:1 and 2 quotes from the past: “we appeal to you” (who have enjoyed material wealth and a wealth of every other kind … **including the Gospel**) “to **not receive the grace of God in vain**. God says” **to the Corinthians and Americans what He said through Isaiah to the Judeans**: “In a favorable time **I listened to you (… and answered)**, and **in a** **day of salvation I have helped you**.” “**Do not receive that grace in vain!”**

**Text**

**Judah** faced everything from abundance to pandemics. **Corinth** faced the same. Political opinions were divided in both places, but all had the opportunity to freely express themselves. Immigration was a challenge similarly in Judah and Corinth, and **distractions** were plentiful. People had the **right** to “pursue happiness”, and **did** with an abandon to anything else that they couldn’t “fit into their schedule”.

“**We put** no **obstacle** in anyone’s way”, Paul said, “so that no fault may be found with our ministry, but **as servants of God we commend ourselves in every way**: by great endurance, in afflictions, hardships, calamities, beatings, imprisonments, riots, labors, sleepless nights, hunger; by purity, knowledge, patience, kindness, the Holy Spirit, genuine love; by truthful speech, and the power of God; with the weapons of righteousness for the right hand and for the left; through honor and dishonor, through slander and praise. We are treated as impostors, and yet are true; as unknown, and yet well known; as dying, and behold, we live; as punished, and yet not killed; as sorrowful, yet always rejoicing; as poor, yet making many rich; as having nothing, yet possessing everything.” What a long listing of the pursuit not of “**happiness**” but of **“service to God” for the sake of cutting through the apathy of any around not also in “service to God” for an eternal sake**.

The goal is a non-apathetic “service to God”, removing “obstacles” which can get in the way of that. Judah and Corinth and America share “obstacles” obstructing “service to God” by apathy toward Him (I think). Isaiah and Paul and “servants of God” pastors and parents and Good Christian friends **want and strive for some “service to God”-in-us** focus and energy and commitment and follow-through beginning with an attitude that’s not fickle or inappropriate or “obstructed”. “**We put no obstacle in anyone’s way, so that no fault may be found with our ministry, but as servants of God we commend ourselves in every way**”. [Any **other** types of “**obstacles**” **(another key word today)**?] ….

The “**obstacles**”, while **self-allowed** **in** “**apathy**”, come also as “**storms**” or “**calamity**” as we are shown by **Job’s situation** and among **disciples in small boats upon a sea**. The **REMEDY** (the “**ANSWER**” / the “**SALVATION**”) is the **same under any circumstance** (and **that’s** the importance of those texts surrounding the one in 2nd Corinthians quoting from, also, Isaiah). “**’In a favorable time I listened to you (answered you), and in a day of salvation I have helped you.’ Behold, now is the favorable time; behold, now is the day of salvation**.” **The One** in the boat no matter what storm, the **God** who did “lay the foundation of the earth, determining its measurements, shutting in the sea with doors, prescribing limits for it, setting bars and doors for it, staying proud waves” answers the question about “salvation” in the boats of our situations, calm during storms that we can remain calm during (since He’s there), saving from the overwhelming waves of sinfulness and inability (in us) to do anything more about that than ignore the problem (not facing it, or letting the Divine Son face it **for us**), **HE is** the answer to disciples question: “**WHO THEN IS THIS**, that **even wind and sea obey Him?**”

**Application**

It’s no accident that the Church had named the pew portion (the Church member portion) of Sanctuaries “naves” (which means boats). If you look up, you’re in an upside-down boat, the keel being the pinnacle that roof seems to shape. It’s a **reminder of this very Gospel account** … and how this Epistle lesson wants **every “obstacle” removed from our distracted awareness and attitude (an almost aggressive confidence and dedication to “service to God” for the benefits of ourselves and for our children and the whole world who also should “serve God”)**.

“Behold, **now** is the **favorable time**; behold, **now** is the **day of** **salvation**!” [How do we understand “**favorable time / now**” **(another key phrase today)**? How do we understand “**salvation**” (the key word for us today / Jesus, who even the wind and seas obey, yet incarnate to sacrifice Himself in service to us?] ….

In +Jesus’ name. Amen.