

REGARDLESS OF WHICH EXTREME WE ARE IN

On Tuesday night I experienced two extremes when it comes to ministry. At 6:30 p.m., I was sitting in a meeting to decide whether the pastoral tie between the minister and the congregation should be discontinued due to financial constraints. It is never a pleasant experience to sit in such meetings to see a relationship between the minister and the congregation come to an end. While this meeting was going on I was aware that another meeting was taking place on-line to determine if a new minister from the Hamilton area would be approved to be the next pastor at a congregation within our Presbytery. Those kinds of meetings tend to be pleasant experiences for me because I like to hear about the excitement that the congregation and the new minister feel about this journey they are about to take together.

On the very same night, around the very same time one minister would be disappointed that his time had come to an end with his congregation, and another would be excited that he was about to start on a new chapter of ministry in his life. I was conscious of the two extremes that these ministers were going through because I have faced these kinds of extremes in my life too. Twice I have had the joy as a minister of being called to come and be the pastor of a congregation. It truly is a happy moment in any minister's life. But like the other minister on Tuesday night, I too have had to have my ministry with a congregation come to an end. In my case it was not due to financial constraints but rather health issues. A pastor truly does grieve and experience loss when their time as a church's spiritual leader comes to an end.

Sometimes we are that person who is experiencing one extreme or the other in life. There are so many extremes we might experience:

- in one moment life, and the next death
- in one moment health, and in another sickness
- in one moment calmness, and in another uncertainty
- in one moment tears of joy, and in another tears of sadness
- in one moment employment, and in the next unemployment

These are just some of the many extremes we might face through the course of our lives. Just as we saw with the ministers on Tuesday night, some of these extremes we desire and others we truly do not. Some of these extremes that we do not desire to enter into our lives are unfortunately beyond our control. They can come upon us suddenly and unexpected. We see an example of this in the Bible as the disciples set out to sail to Bethsaida.

We can find this story in **Mark 6:45-52**. Jesus had just fed the crowd of 5,000 men with 5 loaves and two fish. It was getting late so Jesus instructed the disciples to get into the boat and sail across to the other side, while He went up into the hills to pray. The disciples were about to experience a sequence of extremes over the course of the next nine hours. Here are the extremes they encountered:

- as they set sail it was still daylight, but darkness soon covered the sky
- the water started off calm, but then winds and waves began to arise
- the storm was manageable at first, but then they began to struggle
- their emotions were calm at the beginning, but now they were filled with terror and fear

These disciples faced such extremes in just a few short hours. The passage tells us that Jesus was aware of their struggles and came out to them walking on the water. Jesus said to them, "**Don't be afraid. Take courage! I am here!**" After saying this, He climbed into the boat with the disciples, and they were about to experience another extreme that night. The winds suddenly stopped, and the waves stilled. The disciples experienced so many extremes in such a short time. What this story is meant to teach us is to recognize Jesus' presence, power, and help as we are going through such extreme situations in our lives. Jesus is fully aware of what we are experiencing in these moments, and as we see He is not powerless to help us get through these extreme situations. The same One who calmed the winds, and the waves can bring peace and stability back to our lives too in the midst of our more difficult and extreme moments. What we need to do in these situations is have faith rather than fear, and trust rather than doubt in Jesus. I hope this is a lesson that you have learned as you face extremes and I hope it is one

the minister has learned who faced the extreme Tuesday night of having the pastoral relationship dissolved with his congregation. As I mentioned, I have been in that situation before. I know the walk very well. Despite my loss, I walked with Jesus during that time in trust and faith, rather than with doubt and fear. True to who He is, and what He promises to do, He dealt with the extremes I was encountering:

- He first dealt with my extreme of not having the health to be able to work and healed me to the point I could start looking to work again
- Then He took me from the extreme of being without a church to pastor to bringing me here to minister since 2009.

He brought me through those two extremes, and for that I am extremely grateful. I pray that you are not going through any unpleasant extremes in your life right now, but if you are ***walk in faith and assurance knowing Jesus is aware, and already is at work to bring you back to a more pleasant position in life.***

Keep Safe and God Bless.

Pastor Dean.