

Why should I be excited about tomorrow? That is a question that every person thinks about from time to time. Why should I be excited about tomorrow? “Because it’s good for you,” we are told. “It’s healthy.” And it’s true, that having a positive outlook on life is healthier than having a negative outlook on life. And so I’ll be excited about tomorrow, I’ll be hopeful about tomorrow, because it’s good for me.

That’s easy to do when things are going well. But what happens when things aren’t going well? Let me put you into a situation for a moment... What if you were Captain Francesco Schettino, Captain of the Costa Concordia. You want to give a special salute to the island of Giglio to promote your cruise line to the people there. So you manually change the course of the ship for a close encounter with Giglio. You end up hitting the reef, and putting a 165 foot gash into your ship. The ship sinks. At last count 17 are dead. After the investigation is over, they determine that you are to blame. You are responsible. It’s your fault that those people died.

Now what do you do? Can you still be excited about tomorrow? Are you going to wake up and have a positive outlook on life because it’s healthy? No way. It doesn’t work in that situation. Prison, fines, disgust of people everywhere will tail you the rest of your life.

But our shipwreck disaster doesn’t have to take place off the island of Giglio. Our shipwrecks take place most of the time on dry land. Shipwrecks include: Divorce, death in the family, lingering illnesses, job loss, or a super dysfunctional family. Where do you go for comfort and strength? A Christian is someone who knows where to go. No matter what you’re situation, no matter how desperate or hopeless life seems to be, there is a place you can go, and there you find what you need when life has tossed you into the depths. Today we’re going to talk about that place, and we’re going to talk about those depths, as we see how Jesus Christ changes the way you look at tomorrow.

Perhaps there is no better example of someone in a desperate situation than Job. Job was a man who had lost everything. At one time he was rich, but then he lost all of his wealth. At one time he had 10 children, but then all of them died in an accident. At one time he was healthy, but now he was covered with sores and was slowly dying. At one time he was respected, but now he had lost his honor – everyone was talking about him. And so, as Job thought about tomorrow, he fell into the sin of despair. What exactly is despair? Listen to Job. Verse 3, “I have been allotted months of futility.” In other words, my whole life has been one big waste of time. Verse 4: “When I lay down I think, ‘How long before I get up?’ The night drags on, and I toss till dawn.” Job couldn’t sleep. Physically, he was suffering too much. Psychologically, he was too depressed to sleep. Verse 6: “My days are swifter than a weaver’s shuttle, and they come to and end without hope.” Job felt no hope as he thought about the future. Verse 7 is the most striking: “Remember, O God, that my life is but a breath; my eyes will never see happiness again.” Perhaps that is the best picture of despair: I will never see happiness again.

Job was at a point in his life when he hated to think about tomorrow. There was nothing good about the future. I will never see happiness again. Job had fallen into the sin of despair. He felt like he had nowhere to go.

What could bring you to a point like this? Well, perhaps, like Job, you lose your entire savings. Even your 401K is gone. You have to declare bankruptcy. Maybe, like Job, you lose a child – to bury your own son or daughter is a terrible thing. Or your own kids turn their backs on God, and get hooked into the drug scene. They end up having some kids out of wedlock. Now someone has to help the grandkids because they are getting messed up too. And in your golden years you are raising another family. Maybe, like Job, you lose your health – you become incurably ill. Or maybe, like Job, you lose your honor, your reputation – you become the talk of

the town, the laughingstock, because of something you said or did. Imagine if all these things happened to you at the same time. And you feel like you will never see happiness again. You have fallen into the sin of despair, and feel like you have nowhere to go.

Some people at this point commit suicide. You see this in the news from time to time – a depressed person kills other people, and then turns the gun on himself. It's the sin of despair – to stop believing that God is in control, that God cares about your life. We have all fallen into this sin of despair from time to time. Maybe not to the degree of Job, but we've all had our moments. Moments when we've thought: "God's not in control." "God doesn't care!" We've all had moments when we have fallen into the sin of believing that God is somewhere else, far far away, that he doesn't care, and we have nowhere to go.

But look at our Gospel lesson for this morning, Mark 1:29 and following. We see Jesus Christ, the Son of God. He is not somewhere else. He is not far away. He's right here, on our planet. In Mark chapter one, we see that he does care. He is in control. We see Jesus in the home of Peter, healing Peter's mother-in-law. We see him in the midst of sick people, healing them and all the demon-possessed. The more we look at Christ, the more we realize that we don't need to despair. These sick people had a place to go, and that place was Christ. He does care, very much. Yes, the more we look at Christ, the more we realize that there IS a reason to hope, there IS a reason to be excited about tomorrow, there IS a reason to have joy in our hearts, regardless of our earthly circumstances.

The moment you begin to think that God has stopped caring about your life, then it's time to repent. Then it's time to stop thinking about yourself, it's time to stop wallowing in self-pity. It's time to run to Christ. Think of what he has done for you on the cross. This same Jesus who healed all these people, this same Jesus who is the Son of God, a few years later, allowed himself to be crucified on a cross for you. The crucifixion of Jesus Christ is proof that we do not have a God who is far away, or a God who doesn't care. God cares about us so much, that he became a human being, and lived among us, and gave us his Word, and died on a cross to take away our sin. We have a God who rose from the dead, and promises that someday he'll raise us from the dead too. We have a God who forgives us for all the times we have fallen into the sin of despair, and who promises us that someday we'll be in heaven with him.

If you just focus on your problems all the time, you'll think that God doesn't care. But if you run to Christ, it changes the way you think about tomorrow. There once was a child who liked to touch everything. He would hold vases and flowerpots and electrical cords - anything he could get his hands on. One day, he was holding one of his mother's priceless decorative dishes – a family heirloom handed down from generation to generation. And he held that dish in his hand, and then he dropped it to the floor, and it broke into a million pieces with a crash. And at that moment, that child knew that he was in trouble. He had broken something that could never be fixed. And as he heard his mother running toward him, through the house, he said to himself, "I will never see happiness again." Nowhere to go.

Isn't that a picture of what happened to our relationship with God? The most precious, the most priceless thing in the world - our relationship with God. But then Adam and Eve fell into sin, and at that moment, our relationship with God shattered into a million pieces. It was unfixable. Adam and Eve probably felt that they would never see happiness again.

But God didn't turn his back on the human race. Instead, he sent his Son, Jesus Christ, who did the unthinkable. Christ took that shattered relationship and put it back together again. Jesus has created a place to go when life seems unfixable, and that place is the cross. There he shed his blood for you. There he sacrificed his life for you. There you are forgiven by God, no

matter how big the sin. The cross is where Christians go, when their world is turned completely upside down.

Eventually, God proved his love to Job by restoring him. God gave back to Job his health, and double the wealth he had had before. He gave to Job 10 new children, and restored his reputation in the community. If you ever find yourself in the midst of a disaster, whatever it might be, have faith that God is in control, and that he does care. Have faith that God can restore you, just as he restored Job. And if God in his wisdom chooses not to restore you this way, then have faith that God is still in control, and that he still cares, and that he will work out all things for your good. Look at the well known passage from Romans 8:28. “We know that all things work together for good to them that love God, to them who are the called according to his purpose.”

Like a father who won't give his five-year old the heaviest suitcase to carry out to the car, God doesn't let anything into our life that we can't handle with his help and by his grace. But that's the key isn't it? We can handle anything; we can do all things, but only through him who gives us strength (Philippians 4:13). So are you feeling helpless right now? Great! Let God work in and through you. Like the child who doesn't attempt to drag the heavy suitcase up the stairs by himself but waits for Dad's help, believers who entrust themselves to Jesus will see him do great things for them. On the other hand children who insist they can carry the heavy suitcase themselves will only become frustrated and may even hurt themselves.

Yes, as sinful human beings we are helpless but we are not hopeless. We're sure that our life has meaning because God has changed the meaning of our death. Death is no longer a token of defeat; it's a prelude to a wonderful victory. Job himself knew this and would confess: “I know that my Redeemer lives, and that in the end he will stand upon the earth. 26 And after my skin has been destroyed, yet in my flesh I will see God; 27 I myself will see him with my own eyes—I, and not another. How my heart yearns within me!” (Job 19:25, 26)

Since Jesus has changed the meaning of death, every life has purpose - even the life of the person confined to the wheel chair, even the life of the infant who never makes it out of his mother's womb. The purpose of every life is to praise and glorify God and to train others to do the same. We will glorify God in every circumstance because we know that he always works for our good. He allows trial and difficulty because he loves us and wants to purify and strengthen our faith in him.

Jesus, the Redeemer that Job spoke about, changes the way we look at the present. Today is not just another day of difficulty. It's not just another day of pain. It's another opportunity to thank and praise God. It's another opportunity for service. Christ has changed the way I think for tomorrow. Its totally positive. Amen.