

Shameless Audacity - Part 3
"Praying... In the Long-Middle!"
August 22nd, 2021

Intro:

- Day 14!!!

- ? When was the last time you called an 800 Number & were put "In the Queue?!?"

- *"The Approx. Wait Time is 20 minutes..."*

- You're like, "Okay, I can hold on for 20 minutes..." right?

- But what about when you don't know how long it's going to be???

- ALLISON - 2 HOURS ON DELTA'S HOLD!!!

- She finally just hung up!

- So many of us do that with Prayer, don't we???

- We're willing to Wait on God... for a While!

**- But when Days turn into Months, & Months... Years & Years...
Decades, man, it's hard to keep our faith up, huh???**

- That's what I want to talk about today: "Praying... in the Long Middle!"

- One of the Most Difficult things about prayer is the Waiting & the Not Knowing How Long it's going to take, or worse... Not knowing if its all going to turn out the way we think it should!

- ? What is God up to in "The Long Middle?"

PRAY

- Thankfully, we're not the first ones to have had to trust God in the Long Middle!

- The Bible is full of people's stories who faced Massively Difficult circumstances & yet, kept their Faith in God High, even when they didn't know how it was all going to turn out!

- See, we read their stories, & because we know how it ends, it's easy to think that they didn't have to have faith in an Unknown Outcome like we do!

- But that's not true!

- Every person, except Jesus, had to trust like we do in the midst of their Long Middle!

- There are so many stories to pick from:

- Moses - Children of Israel - 40 years - Hannah - Wanting a Baby

- Paul in Prison - David facing Goliath - David on the run - Saul

- Literally, everyone who came to Jesus needing a Miracle!

- I want us to look at the night Jesus put the Disciples in a boat & went off to pray by Himself!!!

Matthew 14:22-24 "Immediately Jesus made the disciples get into the boat and go on ahead of him to the other side, while he dismissed the crowd. After he had dismissed them, he went up on a mountainside by himself to pray. Later that night, he was there alone, and the boat was already a considerable distance from land, buffeted by the waves because the wind was against it."

- Explain:

- A Massive storm comes on them while they're trying to get from one side of the lake to the other!!!

- AND... Jesus is NOT with them!!! They're all alone in this storm!

- Some of us feel that way about what we're facing right now...

- A DIAGNOSIS - A FINANCIAL SITUATION - A RELATIONSHIP

- A LAWSUIT - A DAUNTING WAYWARD LOVED ONE

- You're looking on going, "God I'm in a Massive Storm where are You?"

- That's where the disciples found themselves!

3 Thoughts on "The Long Middle:"

1. The Middle is always about More than "What" we are Praying about.

A. For the Disciples, they just wanted to get to the other side as fast as possible!

- Walk, Ride, Boat, Wagon, Horse, Carrier Pigeon, we don't care, we just want to get from "Over here" to "Over there!"

B. That's us, isn't it???

- When we face something, we just want to get "Through it" as fast as we possibly can!!!

- So... when we pray, that's what we pray for!!!

- *"God... get me through this, out of this... as fast as You can!"*

C. But... God's in the Transformation Business, not just the "Get-me-through-this-as-fast-as-possible" Business!

- We are focused on "The What" & God is focused on "The Who" which is US & our Heart!!!

Romans 8:29 "For those God foreknew he also predestined to be conformed to the image of his Son..."

D. The whole goal of our Journey here on earth is NOT that we get what we want, but that we are CONFORMED into HIS IMAGE!!!

- From the moment we say to a Relationship with Jesus to the day we die, God has 1 MASSIVE AGENDA - To make us look like JESUS!!!

E. Our Americanized Version of Christianity doesn't teach us this:

- Declaration of Independence - "Life, Liberty & the Pursuit of Happiness..." - That's an American Agenda, not God's Agenda for our lives!

- There's nothing wrong with those things, they're just NOT God's #1 Agenda for our life!

- Said Plainly: "God is not as interested in our Happiness as He is in our Being Conformed to His Image!"

- Sadly, we have transposed an "Americanized Philosophy" on the Teachings of Jesus!

v. 25-27 "Shortly before dawn Jesus went out to them, walking on the lake. When the disciples saw him walking on the lake, they were terrified. "It's a ghost," they said, and cried out in fear. But Jesus immediately said to them: "Take courage! It is I. Don't be afraid."

- They had been out there a long time... All Night!
 - BEING CAUGHT IN A STORM ILL - Minutes feel like Hours!!!
- They were Cold, Wet, Discouraged, Exhausted & Scared!!!
 - MIP: Sounds like some of us doesn't it???

2. Just because it looks like God is doing nothing, doesn't mean He's doing nothing.

A. We can't know for sure what Jesus was doing all night, but what we do know is He was praying!

- He was connecting with the Heavenly Father!
- & we know from God's Character that He cares about us more than we can imagine!
 - So I'm confident His eye & His heart & His focus was on these guys that He loved SO MUCH!!!

B. MIP: The same is true of the Storm you're facing!

- You have a God who knows & cares & is interceding on your behalf!

Hebrews 7:25 "Therefore he is able to save completely those who come to God through him, because he always lives to intercede for them."

C. We have a High Priest in Jesus who is Always Interceding & standing in the Gap for us!!!

- Church: We don't serve a "Do Nothing" God!!!
- Even when it looks like He's not "Doing anything," He always is!

D. We are FINITE, He is INfinite!!!

- We see so little, He sees it ALL!!!

E. OUR PATH VS. HIS PATH ILL.

- We want a Straight Line path! That makes so much sense to us!
- He wants a Path that makes us Trust Him & Become like Him more!!!
 - The Disciples - Just get us to the Other side!
 - God - Just get you to see another side of my Power!!!

v. 28-30 "Lord, if it's you," Peter replied, "tell me to come to you on the water." "Come," he said. Then Peter got down out of the boat, walked on the water and came toward Jesus. But when he saw the wind, he was afraid and, beginning to sink, cried out, "Lord, save me!"

v. 31-33 "Immediately Jesus reached out his hand and caught him. "You of little faith," he said, "why did you doubt?" And when they climbed into the boat, the wind died down. Then those who were in the boat worshiped him, saying, "Truly you are the Son of God."

- Explain...

3. In the Middle, it's not ours to Know, it's our to Trust.

A. God wanted Peter to walk on water with Him, not just get to the other side!

- God wanted those 11 dudes to see it so their faith could be strengthened!

B. Church: There are just some aspects of God we can't see until we are in the storm!!!

- MIP: So many of us are so busy Cursing the Storm that we are Missing the Opportunity to Walk on Water in the Midst of it!!!
- Peter could have yelled, "Jesus, if it's You, make the wind & rain stop!"
 - But he did, he yelled, "Tell me to come to You!"

C. MIP: ??? What are we "Yelling" in our storm???

- "I just want it to end?" or
- "God, how do you want to stretch my faith???"

D. Following God is not a Scavenger Hunt at a Birthday Party where every prize is Candy!

- Following God is a Factory where He's trying to make us into His image!!!

E. LOUISVILLE SLUGGER FACTORY ILL.

- It starts as a Block of Wood, but then through a massive process, it becomes a Baseball Bat used for Glorious Purposes!

- SHOW A BAT & THE MINI BAT!!!

- That's what God's up to in our lives too!!!

2 Corinthians 3:18 "And we all, who with unveiled faces contemplate the Lord's glory, are being transformed into his image with ever-increasing glory, which comes from the Lord, who is the Spirit."

F. The Middle is ALWAYS about us being Conformed to His Image!!!

Challenge:

? Are you "On Hold" right now? In the Middle?

- ? How are you seeing it?

? Where do you need to stop asking God to make the rain stop & start asking Him for the faith to Walk on Water?

ALTAR CALL - MERGE MOMENT