

July 12 2009 / Ephesians 1:3-14

I have a joke that is a takeoff on an old joke but before I start let me remind you how we do things since I've been gone a couple of Sundays. I tell a joke when I stop talking, whether the joke is good or bad, when I stop talking you laugh.

Ok, this pastor hears that the walleyes are really biting so when he wakes up this beautiful Sunday morning he calls Pastor Dean and says "I'm really sick I can't come in. You'll have to do it". Kind hearted Pastor Dean feels sorry for the unnamed pastor and agrees to help out. This unnamed pastor goes out and on the first cast hooks not only the biggest fish he ever caught but a world record. He is even able to land it with his light tackle. Looking down from heaven Gabriel says to God, "What are you doing, he lied about being sick and is suppose to be in church." God says, "Whose he gonna tell?"

Grace and peace from God our father and Jesus Christ his son our Lord.

First I won't to read again from Paul's letter to the Ephesians and this is good news, no great news. Unlike the big fish caught while playing hookie this is great news that you can tell.

Ephesians 1:3-14

1. Blessed be the God and Father of our Lord Jesus Christ, who has blessed us in Christ with every spiritual blessing in the heavenly places,
2. he chose us in Christ before the foundation of the world to be holy and blameless before him in love.
3. He destined us for adoption as his children through Jesus Christ, according to the good pleasure of his will,
4. to the praise of his glorious grace that he freely bestowed on us in the Beloved.
5. In him Jesus, we have redemption through his blood, the forgiveness of our trespasses, according to the riches of his grace that he lavished on us.
6. he has made known to us the mystery of his will, according to his good pleasure that he set forth in Christ, **10** as a plan for the fullness of time, to gather up all things in him, things in heaven and things on earth.
7. In Christ we have also obtained an inheritance, having been destined according to the purpose of him who accomplishes all things according to his counsel and will,
8. so that we, who were the first to set our hope on Christ, might live for the praise of his glory.
9. In him you also, when you had heard the word of truth, the gospel of your salvation, and had believed in him, were marked with the seal of the promised Holy Spirit;
10. this is the pledge of our inheritance toward redemption as God's own people, to the praise of his glory.

Paul writes this as an opening to his letter to the Ephesians it's a good opening but it's better than an opening it is a statement of faith. It is a foundation for life.

Could I have the kids come up at this time?

Any of you like to climb? When I was little I used to love to climb. I climbed trees and rocks and up in the kitchen to get cookies. How about you?

Have any of you ever gone rock climbing? Rock climbing seems a little scary. If you fall from high up on to rocks I bet it hurts. What do you think?



Maybe that is why rock climbers have lots of equipment to keep them safe. They have harnesses and strong clips,

and helmets and strong ropes. Why do they have this stuff. So if they fall they are protected.

I don't have any of that stuff but I have this. Instead of a harness I have this. It's some bundgy cords I put together. I've got this clip. And I thought I had some strong rope and I looked all round. This dental floss is pretty strong. Ready to go rock climbing? Why not? It's good to have something strong you can count on.

Well you know remember I read that reading before you came up. The Apostle Paul was talking about that. He was reminding these people that they don't have to worry because God has picked them and will bless them and take care of them. Why do you think I read that? Because just like the right rock climbing equipment protects you in case you fall God protects you when things go bad. Jesus is our harness.

Thanks for coming up.

Paul reminds us that Jesus is our harness but Jesus does more than protect us.

Our gospel for today is kind of a flash back in the middle of the mission of the 12. Jesus sent his disciples out to work for him. They were to heal the sick, cast out demons, and preach the good news. And they did it. As Mark is writing about that he tells about the death of John the Baptist.

I want go into all the gruesome details suffice to say, he was killed in the process of doing God's work. Why put this flash back in the middle of the 12's mission work? Could it be that while good things happen when we do the Lord's work, bad things happen too?

As you do the Lord's work you might not lose your life, though many have, maybe you'll face set backs. Pastor Dean and I feel very blessed to be among you here at Urland but some pastors while trying to serve the Lord have their own congregations and or other staff members fighting against them.

And obviously it's not just pastor who do the lord's work and the Lord's work isn't limited to healing the sick and casting out demons. Some people while they are just living out their lives at school, at work, on vacation, during family reunions, morning our loved ones are challenged in their faith. There are times we are tempted to run away from struggle, to strike back when people hurt us.

It is in these challenging times we see that Jesus is not just our harness that keeps us from falling but he is also our strength that gives us patience and understanding.

Bad things happen. Famous people died, banks are robbed, children suffer. But we are not like those without hope. We are the among the ones choose by the grace of God to represent him in this world in word and deed.

Bad things happen but good things also happen. Let's look for the blessings and praise God in good times and bad. Amen?