

Infectious: Unlikely Content

Reconnect – May 3, 2009

Text: II Corinthians 4:5-10, 16-18; I Peter 2:9

Key Thought: Even in our worst struggles, God is still at work, producing a life in us that spreads to others.

You see, we don't go around preaching about ourselves. We preach that Jesus Christ is Lord, and we ourselves are your servants for Jesus' sake. For God, who said, "Let there be light in the darkness," has made this light shine in our hearts so we could know the glory of God that is seen in the face of Jesus Christ. We now have this light shining in our hearts, but we ourselves are like fragile clay jars containing this great treasure. This makes it clear that our great power is from God, not from ourselves. We are pressed on every side by troubles, but we are not crushed. We are perplexed, but not driven to despair. We are hunted down, but never abandoned by God. We get knocked down, but we are not destroyed. Through suffering, our bodies continue to share in the death of Jesus so that the life of Jesus may also be seen in our bodies... That is why we never give up. Though our bodies are dying, our inner beings are being renewed every day. For our present troubles are small and won't last very long. Yet they produce for us a glory that vastly outweighs them and will last forever! So we don't look at the troubles we can see now; rather, we fix our gaze on things that cannot be seen. For the things we see now will soon be gone, but the things we cannot see will last forever. (II Corinthians 4:5-10,16-18, NLT)

Intro: Some days...

- (wearing a surgical mask thingie – like in Mexico)
- Tough week for the H1N1 virus – can't call it the Swine Flu anymore, because the pigs complained
- (mention the video earlier) – all of this from a four year old who liked to play with the piggies...!
- Imagine having that kind of infectious power – to be able to alter everyone around you just by doing your thing and breathing in and out
- We've been looking at "infectious" as a positive adjective – as something describing the way that we as Christians are called to give off the love of God in our lives and spread His message
- But sometimes, we figure that we should wear a mask – that what we have, we don't want to spread
- Maybe we're having a bad day – or it's been a bad year – or we're sick, or someone we love is suffering, or we're broke, or just in a grump
- Maybe we've grown unsure about this life of faith in God – or we're not sure where we stand with Him, or if we even HAVE anything that was "spreadable"
- What do you do with that?
- Generally, the answer in the past has been, "Feel guilty on the inside, but hide it on the outside and put a face on" – or a DIFFERENT kind of mask 😊
- But that doesn't seem right, somehow – or psychologically healthy, for that matter – so what to do?

Tough times all around:

- Paul the church starter knew what it was to go through tough times – even though he had actually seen a vision of the risen Jesus, even though they had had a conversation, there were still times that he felt so down, so discouraged, like giving up
- He’s writing the section of the Bible that was read a little earlier to a group of people that he has a lot of history with – people that have put him through the wringer – sometimes they are amazing and inspiring for him, and sometimes they make him want to hang up his sandals – sometimes they want to throw him a parade, and sometimes they want to just throw him away
- The section is from his letter we call “Second Corinthians” – it’s a letter he wrote as part of an ongoing correspondence with the Christians in the Greek city of Corinth – the same one that they’re talking about in the “First Vegas” living room – well, this letter is Vegas, the sequel
- Progress is being made, but people in Corinth – followers of Jesus – are still taking shots at Paul, for everything from his teaching to his style and mannerisms and personality – he’s not good enough, he’s not smart enough, and darn it, people don’t like him
- II Corinthians is generally seen as being his most personal letter – he feels so hurt, so betrayed that he just lets it all out – sometimes it even seems like he’s raving at them
- And in this section, he gets into what God is actually doing in him AND them – whether they can see it in him or not

Read Text: II Corinthians 5-10, 16-18, NLT

You see, we don’t go around preaching about ourselves. We preach that Jesus Christ is Lord, and we ourselves are your servants for Jesus’ sake.

- Sometimes you just don’t feel it – God’s not near, no good feelings, no warm fuzzies – just a sense of deep-down sour – and yet right off the top, Paul is quick to say it: “It’s not about you”
- It’s not about him, it’s not about me or anyone else other than Jesus
- Yes, we represent Him – but we are not HIM
- We dress it up in pious ways, that we have to be good because people are watching, that there’s pressure on us to be good examples of Him
- And to a certain extent, that’s true – but it doesn’t rise and fall on us, because no matter who we are or how great we are, it’s not about us – and that means that we might be an illustration of part of the message, but we’re otherwise just the messenger – the whole thing is not on our shoulders – even if, as Paul says, that Jesus has put him in the role of a servant to those people

For God, who said, “Let there be light in the darkness,” has made this light shine in our hearts so we could know the glory of God that is seen in the face of Jesus Christ. We now have this light shining in our hearts, but we ourselves are like fragile clay jars containing this great treasure. This makes it clear that our great power is from God, not from ourselves.

- But it’s not about our feelings on any given day – Paul says that there’s so much more to it than that
- God, who made the universe and everything in it, who calls the light into existence, has made that same incredible, life-giving light shine in our hearts – the glory of God, the face of Jesus – imagine!
- It’s IN us – but then Paul goes on to say, before we get too excited about it, that this incredible treasure is kept within like we are “fragile clay jars”
- **III. - Tupperware** – that phrase “jars of clay” doesn’t mean too much to us today, other than the name of the band – but back in Paul’s time, clay jars were the cheapest and most disposable method of storing things – like shopping bags today – or since those are now a nickel each, we might compare jars of clay today to bad Tupperware
- Yep – the stuff you can never find the right lid for, the stuff that gets all twisted up and doesn’t really seal right, especially if you’re cheap like me and you buy the knockoffs and then try to use them for the next six years
- Paul says that this incredible treasure from God is in us, and that’s like putting a gourmet meal in bad Tupperware – not something you normally do, unless you REALLY want to show that the meal and the container have NOTHING in common
- Logic says that you display important things in important ways – rosewood boxes for collector items, or behind glass, or with soft lighting, to ensure that everyone who sees it marvels at how beautiful it is
- But those “accents” are too often ways to trick people into thinking that what you have is actually nicer than it really is – it can quickly become smoke and mirrors
- Something that is truly incredible can hold the attention all on its own – nothing fancy needed – and THAT, Paul says here, is like God’s power in a person – a flawed, human person like you or me
- On the one hand, incredible gourmet food – on the other hand, REALLY bad Tupperware – to show the size of the difference
- God’s life, God’s power and strength is working in us – the hope of the world, he is making all things new – and yet, he chooses to put this wonder in little old us – with lids that don’t match, with all our bumps and dents and dishwasher marks and twists and turns – and yet, He continues to do that

We are pressed on every side by troubles, but we are not crushed. We are perplexed, but not driven to despair. We are hunted down, but never abandoned by God. We get knocked down, but we are not destroyed. Through suffering, our bodies continue to share in the death of Jesus so that the life of Jesus may also be seen in our bodies...

- If anyone could have a shopping list of ailments, it was Paul – he had been chased out of more cities than a snake oil salesman – and yet, he kept going, because of the treasure that was in him
- Even when he didn’t feel like it, even when he made mistakes – and he definitely made them – he kept going – “He got knocked down – and he got up again” (a la Chumbawumba)

- And catch the way that he looked at it: “Through suffering, we share in the death of Jesus so that His life may also be seen”
- How can that HAPPEN? How does that even work? Seems a bit grim – sorta “Da Vinci Code”ish
- But this idea of something good happening from a bruising, crushing experience, is all around us, especially in nature
 - Think popcorn
 - Think applesauce
 - Think perfume
 - Think... RED
- **Carmine red** – a trade secret that was kept for more than 200 years – it’s everywhere around us, from lipstick to fruit punch, even if we don’t know it (read from the **Wikipigment sheet**)
- Before the [Industrial Revolution](#), the range of color available for art and decorative uses was technically limited. Most of the pigments in use were earth and [mineral](#) pigments, or pigments of biological origin. Pigments from unusual sources such as botanical materials, animal waste, [insects](#), and [mollusks](#) were harvested and traded over long distances. Some colors were costly or impossible to mix with the range of pigments that were available. [Blue](#) and [purple](#) came to be associated with [royalty](#) because of their expense.
- Biological pigments were often difficult to acquire, and the details of their production were kept secret by the manufacturers. [Tyrian Purple](#) is a pigment made from the [mucus](#) of one of several species of [Murex snail](#). Production of Tyrian Purple for use as a [fabric](#) dye began as early as 1200 BCE by the [Phoenicians](#), and was continued by the [Greeks](#) and [Romans](#) until 1453 CE, with the fall of Constantinople.^[1] The pigment was expensive and complex to produce, and items colored with it became associated with power and wealth. Greek historian [Theopompus](#), writing in the 4th century BCE, reported that "purple for dyes fetched its weight in [silver](#) at [Colophon](#) [in Asia Minor]."^[2]
- Mineral pigments were also traded over long distances...



- *Miracle of the Slave* by [Tintoretto](#) (c. 1548). The son of a master [dyer](#), Tintoretto used Carmine Red Lake pigment, derived from the [cochineal](#) insect, to achieve dramatic color effects.
- Spain's conquest of a New World empire in the 16th century introduced new pigments and colors to peoples on both sides of the Atlantic. [Carmine](#), a dye and pigment derived from a parasitic insect found in [Central](#) and [South America](#), attained great status and value in Europe. Produced from harvested, dried, and crushed [cochineal insects](#), carmine could be used in fabric dye, body paint, or in its solid [lake](#) form, almost any kind of paint or [cosmetic](#).
- Natives of [Peru](#) had been producing cochineal dyes for textiles since at least 700 CE,^[4] but Europeans had never seen the color before. When the Spanish invaded the [Aztec empire](#) in what is now [Mexico](#), they were quick to exploit the color for new trade opportunities. [Carmine](#) became the region's second most valuable export next to silver. Pigments produced from the cochineal insect gave the [Catholic cardinals](#) their vibrant robes and the English "Redcoats" their distinctive uniforms. The true source of the pigment, an insect, was kept secret until the 18th century, when biologists discovered the source.^[5]

- Just like Jesus' death brought us life – just like he was crushed for us – so God is producing life in us through the good, bad and ugly that comes our way – and the bad days, the days we snap at people, or growl at them, or give them the shaft – well, ultimately God can even bring life from that - eventually

That is why we never give up. Though our bodies are dying, our inner beings are being renewed every day. For our present troubles are small and won't last very long. Yet they produce for us a glory that vastly outweighs them and will last forever! So we don't look at the troubles we can see now; rather, we fix our gaze on things that cannot be seen. For the things we see now will soon be gone, but the things we cannot see will last forever.

- Paul basically says, “keep your eyes on the prize” – keep them on the horizon
- If you look at the ground when you're riding a bike, you'll fall – same if you keep looking at the handlebars – you have to look up ahead – at the horizon, at the road ahead of you – and then you're fine – and life is the same way

What do you do to get your “mojo” back?

- So what do you do if you feel like you've lost your mojo? Your love for life? Your sweet factor in your relationship with God?
 - Take some time to pray
 - Shake up your routine
 - Silence
 - Solitude
 - Read the Book
 - Get some sleep
 - Eat something healthy
 - Get around someone that recharges you
 - Come back refreshed and go for it
- It will come – because regardless, that life is being produced – and eventually it will spill out

Key Thought:

Even in our worst struggles, God is still at work, producing a life in us that spreads to others.

“... you are a chosen people. You are a kingdom of priests, God's holy nation, his very own possession. This is so you can show others the goodness of God, for he called you out of the darkness into his wonderful light.”

(1 Peter 2:9, NLT)

Conclusion: “Free To Be Me” (video)

- *[play the Francesca B. Video]*
- God has created us and knows us through and through – and who we are is no secret to Him – and yet, even in all of our strengths and shortcomings, He is able to intertwine us into His plan, for us and for others – He is able to make us shine even when we think we would be better off in some kind of “witness protection program”

Response: Prayer Time (band come back?)