

July 21, 2019

Colossians 1:21-23

“Don’t Let Go”

“It’s Going To Be OK” Sermon Series

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“It’s going to be OK!” “It’s going to be OK!” Last Monday night I said those words over and over. And then, for the next twenty-three hours, I kept looping those same words. “It’s going to be OK!”

I was in the airport in Minneapolis. Our group of forty-four high school youth and seven adult leaders had thoroughly enjoyed the National Youth Gathering. We were all exhausted, but eagerly waited for our flight back home.

And then the thunderstorms arrived. Our flight was delayed, delayed again, then finally cancelled. “It’s going to be OK!” I kept saying, to the kids; but to myself, too. “It’s going to be OK!”

Eventually it was OK; but it took a long time. They put us on another flight to Chicago; but that one, too, was delayed. At three-thirty in the morning, we ended up in the Windy City. Several hours later, after pacing the concourses and sleeping on the terminal floor, half our group got on a flight to RDU, and the rest of us finally arrived in the late afternoon. It was an ordeal. But the kids were great, the parents were patient and supportive, and the adult leaders were all stellar.

For twenty-three long hours, though, I kept repeating my mantra: “It’s going to be OK!”

For Christians facing life’s unpredictable twists and turns, struggling through the world’s never-ending problems and crises, “It’s going to be OK!” is a pretty good perspective for us to claim. And that’s the basic message of this book of Colossians.

Paul wrote this letter to the church in Colossae. They were struggling with rejection from the society around them, dealing with heresies inside the church, battling discouragement, fighting their own sinful habits, just like we are. Life in this world is often really hard and really scary. Being a Christian believer doesn't guarantee us an easy ride through life, does it?

But being a Christian – putting faith in Jesus Christ – means that, no matter what, it's going to be OK! Thanks to Jesus Christ, it's going to be OK! Storms are still going to hit us, flights are still going to be delayed, plans are still going to be wrecked, families are still going to struggle, our bodies are still going to age and decay. We may have to endure some real suffering in this life. But thanks to Jesus Christ, we know it's going to be OK!

God's Son makes it OK. Christ Jesus did for us what we could never do ourselves. Jesus laid down his life in our place, to pay for our sins. Christ sacrificed himself so that we can be forgiven. *"You, who once were alienated and hostile in mind, doing evil deeds, he has now reconciled in his body of flesh by his death, in order to present you holy and blameless and above reproach before him ..."* (vs. 21-22). Christ made wretched sinners clean. Forgiven by his sacrifice, Christ presents us pure, spotless, acceptable to God for all eternity.

So no matter what happens to us in this life – no matter how frighteningly fouled-up our journey through life may be – it's going to be OK! God is not going to stop loving us. God will never leave us orphaned and abandoned. God unceasingly cares for us, helps us over the bumps, and guides our way home. It's going to be OK!

"When you pass through the waters, I will be with you; and through the rivers, they shall not overwhelm you; when you walk through fire you shall not be burned, and the flame shall not consume you. For I am the Lord your God, the Holy One of Israel, your Savior" (Isaiah 43:2-3).

St. Paul knew the Lord God as his Savior. He knew it was going to be OK, even when he was suffering. Paul wrote this letter to the Colossians from a prison cell. He had been arrested, falsely accused, threatened, mistreated – all for proclaiming the name of Jesus Christ. Paul spent years stuck in a legal airport, moving from one hearing and appeal and trial to another.

But he never lost hope. He never whined or complained about his troubles. He knew, in the end, it was going to be OK, thanks to Jesus. And in this beautiful epistle to the Christians in Colossae, Paul first reminds them of the miraculous things Christ has already done for them on the cross. You who were alienated and hostile to God because of your sin have been reconciled. Christ, who died to forgive your sins, presents you holy and blameless and above reproach. Paul is assuring us here that no matter how messed up this world may be for us, it really is going to be OK, thanks to Jesus Christ.

And then Paul drives home the point even harder. “You have to stay connected to Christ Jesus,” he exhorts. “It’s going to be OK,” Paul says, *“if indeed you continue in the faith, stable and steadfast, not shifting from the hope of the gospel that you heard”* (vs. 23)

Paul reminds every Christian -- you and me, too: “Don’t let go! You can’t do this on your own. It’s not going to be OK, in the end, if you drift away from Christ. If you start following other religions and philosophies. If you give up your faith connection to Christ. It’s not going to be OK, in the end, if you let go of the hope of the gospel. You have to stay connected to Christ!”

How are you doing with that? How’s your connection with Christ? How *“stable and steadfast”* are you? Have you been *“shifting from the hope of the gospel,”* or clinging to it with all you’ve got?

It's so easy to find other things to do on a Sunday morning, I know. It's so tempting to put sports and dance first for the kids, and church second or third. It's easier by far to just go with the flow of the culture around us, and allow our connection to Christ to weaken, to fade, to become an occasional afterthought.

But that's not OK! In Christ, we have all we need to make it through this life. In Christ, we have forgiveness, salvation, the assurance of God's love. Without Christ, we're not only not OK. We're lost. We're stuck. We're sunk. We're without hope.

"Don't let go," Paul encourages every Christian today. "Don't let go," I want to encourage you today. Say those three words out loud, to encourage each other. "Don't let go." Let's pray for God's help.