**Anchored in the Storm**

Message #1 – “Anchored in the Storm”

Genesis 1:1-5; Hebrews 6:13-20

St. Paul’s United Methodist Church of Elizabethtown

January 10, 2021

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*In the beginning, God created the heavens and the earth.****2****The earth was****without form and void****, and* ***darkness was over the face of***

***the deep****. And the* ***Spirit of God was hovering over the face of the waters****.* ***3****And God said, “Let there be light,” and there was light.****4****And*

*God saw that the light was good.* ***And God separated the light from***

***the darkness****.****5****God called the light Day, and the darkness he called*

*Night. And there was evening and there was morning, the first day.* **(Genesis 1:1-5)**

In the beginning.... God had a plan. Like a Masterful Artist, He set that plan in motion on the grand canvas of the universe. Whether we’ve read the Bible cover to cover or not, most of us have heard the Creation stories – like how God created... everything... in six days—and on the seventh day He rested.

But it actually all started with what best could be described as... chaos.

**Genesis 1:2** says, ***“The earth was without form and void and darkness was over the face of the deep.”*** [That’s typically a sign that you see as you cross the Delaware River to go into New Jersey! ☺]

**Chaos**.

The dictionary has three definitions for chaos:

* complete disorder and confusion
* behavior so unpredictable as to appear random
* the formless matter supposed to have existed before the creation of the universe.

For many of us, we would add a fourth definition: Chaos is... **“The year 2020.”**

Yes, 2020 was a season of chaos. And now, 2021 has begun – and in many ways, it seems like we’re still in it.

Yet, **Genesis 1:1-5** teaches us a very important truth:

**God is not afraid of chaos. And neither should we be**.

Why? -- From God’s perspective, **Chaos is often the birthplace of creativity.** God birthed an entire universe out of chaos. Imagine what He can do with ours.

So, as we begin 2021, I want to invite you to do something with me: We need to suspend our old way of thinking that chaos is bad and order is good. The reality is –

**God is not limited by our limitations.**

**And God is not afraid of the dark.**

Remember – God separated the light from the darkness. He did it again in Jesus. And He’s calling us to do it again today. After all, we are the “light of the world.”

So, as we begin 2021, I want to issue a new focus for our year together. It’s based on a word, a phrase and Bible passage.

**The word is “Anchor.”**

**The phrase is “Anchor in the Storm.”**

**And the Bible passage is Hebrews 6:13-20.**

Today, I want to look with you at that word, phrase and passage and then set in motion a plan – a plan that will take us this year into God’s Word, into God’s unchanging purposes for us, to discover how we may live secure and strong within a season of chaos.

And I have a new prayer that I want to invite you to pray with me this year. Some of you got a sampling of this prayer a few months ago. Today, I want to invite you to pray this every week, perhaps even every day.

This is the prayer –

**Lord, what do you need me to see, what do you need me to hear, what do you need me to know, what do you need me to do? I am your servant in Jesus’s name. Amen.**

Let me draw you into the word – Anchor, the phrase – “Anchor in the Storm,” and now the passage – **Hebrews 6:13-20**.

***13****For when God made a promise to Abraham, since he had no one greater by whom to swear, he swore by himself,****14****saying, “Surely I will bless you and multiply you.”****15****And thus Abraham, having patiently waited, obtained the promise.****16****For people swear by something greater than themselves, and in all their disputes an oath is final for confirmation.****17****So when God desired to show more convincingly to the heirs of the promise****the unchangeable character of his purpose****, he* ***guaranteed*** *it with an oath,****18****so that by* ***two unchangeable things****, in which it is impossible for God to lie, we who have fled for refuge might have strong encouragement* ***to hold fast to the hope set before us****.****19We have this as a sure and steadfast anchor of the soul,*** *a**hope that enters into the inner place behind the curtain,****20****where Jesus has gone as a* ***forerunner*** *on our behalf, having become a high priest forever after the order of Melchizedek.* (**Hebrews 6:13-20)**

When it’s to be used, an anchor typically has a rope or chain that has two ends – one end is attached to the anchor itself, the other is secured to the boat. In order for an anchor to work properly, both ends must be secured appropriately.

--- The one end must be connected to the anchor. Otherwise, you toss the anchor out of the boat and it just sinks.

--- The other end must be connected to the boat. Again, otherwise, the anchor will simply sink and not help the boat at all.

--- When both ends of the rope are securely connected to their appropriate places, the anchor helps the boat withstand the winds and waves of storms that come our way.

Listen... anchors are most important for when the winds, the waves, and the weather are challenging.

Now, Hebrews 6 has a larger context. The writer of the letter is actually warning the readers about the dangers of drifting away from God.

Hebrews was written in the latter part of the first century – when Christians were facing major persecution. According to biblical scholars, most likely it was written to Jewish Christians who, because of the persecution, were stepping away from following Jesus and instead, were returning to Judaism.

Hebrews is a carefully written letter. It spends quite a bit of time showing those early Christians how going back to the old ways of doing life are no longer helpful. The writer emphasizes that by virtue of His crucifixion and resurrection -- Jesus fulfilled the entire Jewish Law. Therefore, returning to the Judaism of the day was not going to bring them salvation and eternal life. According to the writer of Hebrews, only Jesus could do that. Jesus is the only way by which we may be saved.

This is such an important point. Hebrews is basically telling those early Christians that Jesus is THE Source of hope ... and the ONLY truth that will give them eternal life.

What do we know about this hope from this passage?

* + **It is “set before us” (18) –** It’s a hope that God Himself gives us.
  + **It is rooted in the “unchangeable character of God’s purpose” (17) –** This hope expresses trust in a plan that God has had from the very beginning of time.
  + **It is confirmed by two “unchangeable things” –** God’s promise and God’s oath (18) – Our hope in Christ is rooted in God’s promises from the very beginning – established with Abraham with an oath.
  + **It is “sure and steadfast” (19) –** There is nothing – NOTHING – that can alter, defeat, challenge or nullify God’s promise. God never goes back on His Promises.
  + **It is empowered by the Resurrected Jesus (19-20) –** We also know that our hope is guaranteed – guaranteed – by the resurrection of Jesus. The resurrection of Jesus actually shows God is serious about His Promise.
  + **Christ gives us the power to hold fast (18) to the “hope set before us.” –** Hebrews reminds us that Jesus genuinely wants us to put our hope in Him. He wants us to trust Him. And by the Holy Spirit, He gives us the power of faith to believe God’s Promise.

In other words, Hebrews teaches us that **Jesus IS the anchor and we are to hold fast to Him –** especially in the storms of life... especially within the chaos.

**We don’t put our hope in a future.**

**We put our hope in a person – Jesus.**

Look, God has a plan. He has had a plan since the beginning. In the beginning.... God separated the light from the darkness. When we face dark times, when we face chaos... we need to hold on to the steadfast, secure Anchor that is Jesus.

So, let’s anchor ourselves in the One who looked upon chaos / darkness / a world without form or order -- and with a Word, brought Light and Life.

“*Light and Life to all He brings, risen with healing in His wings*”--- that’s what we just sang during the Christmas season. “*Hark! The Herald Angels Sing... glory to the newborn King.”*

Let’s anchor ourselves in the One who created all things – including us - with purpose and intentionality.

How?

Well, let me summarize what this Bible passage teaches us:

1. **God’s promises *never* change.**
   1. Why would they need to? God is Alpha and Omega. He sees through all time.
   2. So, God can be trusted to always true to His word.
2. **God’s promises *never* fail.**
   1. They can be trusted. They are reliable.
   2. They are steadfast. A source of hope because they’re rooted in Jesus Christ.
3. **God’s promises are about life.**
   1. We are to hold fast to the hope set before us (17)
   2. Jesus is a “*forerunner on our behalf*” (20)
      1. “forerunner” is the Greek word “*prodromos*” and it was a military word. The forerunner went on ahead knowing that others would soon be following.

Friends, what chaos do you need anchored right now?

It’s the first Sunday of 2021. We cannot know, nor can we predict, what this year will be like. We may be facing into yet another year of chaos. That’s the cue for us all to let out a huge sigh.

But... There is a purpose in the world. In fact, God brought order into the world – creative order. And it was birthed in the void of chaos. Let’s remember that

**God is not afraid of chaos. And neither should we be**.

Let’s see what God has in mind... what He wants to create out of our chaos.

Let’s pray our prayer together –

**“Lord, what do you need me to see, what do you need me to hear, what do you need me to know, what do you need me to do? I am your servant in Jesus’s name. Amen.”**