

Sunday morning I got up at my normal time for a Sunday, made coffee, showered and was ready to sit down to do some reading and praying when I looked outside. What I thought would only be a dusting of snow, turned out to be more like 3-4 inches of the white stuff – **Ugh!** Anyway, I knew that Karen and our older daughters would be packing up to leave for Houghton later that morning and I needed to get over to the church... And what I thought would be merely a 15 minute “*cleaning up*” turned into an 1 1/2 hour shoveling ordeal and I **STILL** didn’t have the driveway completed!

I must admit to being a bit agitated at first – But, outside alone, early in the morning, no one around, still, quiet, crisp and nothing to look at but a blanket of white, I sensed God’s presence with me a quieting, comforting way. I spent several minutes just contemplating my new surroundings, God’s faithfulness to my family and I began to worship Him while shoveling snow!

“I tell you the truth, you will weep and mourn while the world rejoices. You will grieve, but your grief will turn to joy. A woman giving birth to a child has pain because her time has come; but when her baby is born she forgets the anguish because of her joy that a child is born into the world. So with you: Now is your time of grief, but I will see you again and you will rejoice, and no one will take away your joy.” (John 16:20-22, NIV)

There are some days when, frankly, I don’t feel much like worshiping God. There are probably more days like that than I’d care to admit. But usually those are days are when I’m staring at my circumstances and making faithless judgments about what I see around me. And I struggle with the God-truth that He **IS** in the circumstances that surround my life – **all** the circumstances!

Have you ever considered that heartbreak is part of God’s plans for you, “*plans to prosper you and not to harm you, plans to give you hope and a future*”? (Jeremiah 29:11, NIV) We put so much energy into avoiding the hurt when God would have us embrace it. He wants us to know that he can heal our hurts, even use our hurts for his benefit, and for us to faithfully believe that sometimes the circumstances we think are harming us are actually positive situations God is engineering...

God, who is omnipotent, sees the breadth and depth of our circumstances,

and He knows His plans for our lives. Thinking, then, like Christ, we can slowly begin to understand that avoiding the pain in our lives is actually an act of faithlessness. God calls us to faith in him during difficult circumstances; we'd rather place our faith in avoiding the circumstances.

As always, Jesus shows us the way – because He **IS** the Way. Jesus embraced the pain of God's plan for his life, and he did it with full faith that God was still working the plan to bring a "*hope and a future*" to your life and mine. Christ was so sure that his grief would turn to joy that he showed a *radiant certainty* in God's faithfulness ("*Radiant certainty*" is a phrase William Barclay uses to describe the attitude of Jesus at the Last Supper)

Our Brother Jesus, who is also our King, was heading into a crisis that would cost him His life, yet He was so certain – *radiantly certain* – of God's faithfulness that not one of His disciples even discerned the gravity of the crisis! Jesus was so certain of God's faithfulness that it radiates throughout his whole being.

And we, too, can have this *radiant certainty* about God's hand in our lives. We can say, when it comes to God's faithfulness, "*I know because I know that I know.*" **That's** radiant certainty! The cross was Christ's glory, **not** his penalty – and the same is true of difficult circumstances in our lives!

So what does this mean to me?

- “ *God's faithful character* – You will develop this radiant certainty in God when you learn to trust in his faithful character. Your daily worship of God is irrevocably tied to your faith in God.
- “ *Praise God anyhow* – You must choose to praise and worship God every day, no matter what the circumstances of your life. Developing a radiant certainty in God begins with simple steps of faith and obedience.
- “ *Respond to God, not your circumstances* – When faced with a painful or difficult circumstance, ask God, “How do you want me to respond to this?” Keep your eyes wise for the “Why me?” traps that lay about

your circumstances.

You can be *radiantly certain* loved ones of this: Difficult circumstances are opportunities for you to intentionally focus your faith in God (worship) and to see what He will do to give you hope and healing!

Be Strong, Be Courageous – and remember...

Christ **IS** All!
Pastor Mark