

GOD HAS PLANS FOR US! GOD IS PARTING THE SEA!

Yes, God has plans for us – both individually and collectively. Do you know His plan?

His first priority is getting and keeping us all in a permanent relationship with Himself through Jesus sacrificial death and the work of the Holy Spirit. His second broad priority is enabling and guiding us to lives of faith and faithfulness, following Him and His will.

I would like you to think about an Old Testament story and the lessons we can learn. In roughly 1500 B.C., the Israelites, God's chosen people, lived in Egypt where they were slaves. We do not know much about the spiritual lives of these Israelites between the death of Joseph and the time of Moses, but some were people of faith who called out to God. God heard them and delivered them from slavery to the task-masters of Egypt.

Before He did, however, God laid ten plagues on the Egyptians, none of which touched the Israelites. What was God doing to both the Egyptians and Israelites? He was teaching them by experience that there is a God who is capable of doing anything He desires. He is capable and trustworthy. The faith of the Israelites grew.

As God led the Israelites out of slavery, he led them to a place where they would be squeezed between the Red Sea, the desert, and the pursuing Egyptian army. Many Israelites were fearful. They complained. They wanted to surrender and go back. But God wanted to remove their fear and develop their trust. God miraculously parted the sea – standing the water up in walls on both side – so they could go through on dry ground. Then God wiped out the pursuing Egyptian army by letting the walls of water crash over them.

God likewise uses the tough spots and obstacles in our lives to show us that He is trustworthy and to build our trust. God does the same for all who are His people as He leads us to the "promised land." God is doing everything necessary to protect and guide His people and to grow our trust.

God has already demonstrated in your life the ability to "part the sea" and save you spiritually. He has also, no doubt, on numerous occasions "parted the sea" to rescue you from the obstacles on your journey through life. Think about such situations. Here's just one example: Maybe after letting you wrestle with a difficult choice in your work or career He "parted the sea" to a new opportunity. Here's another: After a period of stress in a relationship, He "parted the sea" to a new beginning. Recently, we and our neighbors have gone through some tough time, alert to the threat of Covid-19, restricted in our movements and connections, But what can God accomplish in this?

Do you see God at work in your life, letting you be pressured and pressed to grow your trust in Him and His protection and guidance? He parts the sea and wants us to follow in faith. Are we going to trust in God and push forward, letting God part the sea for us?

God can do it. "Nothing is impossible with God." (Luke 1:37) God will do it. God is doing it. God is parting the sea on a regular basis in our lives as we trust Him and follow Him.

(over please)

Where does God want you to follow Him in faith? Where does God want to part the sea for you? God has already parted the sea for us to His love and to eternal salvation. God has also parted the sea to His throne room for prayer and to His house for worship and to blessings in this life. He has given us great freedom and opportunity for those. Is God parting the sea to some new opportunity for you or a changed life-pattern or new level of responsibility? Let me urge you to trust Him and follow.

Where does God want us as a congregation to follow Him in faith? Where does God want to part the sea for us at First Lutheran Church? We have chosen "Targets for Improvement." here at First. Can we with power and zeal from the Spirit of God get out of our ruts? Pray for that. Work for that. Encourage and assist those who are responsible for change. But aren't we all responsible for change, as we follow our God and His will?

I believe God is allowing us to be pressed and distressed so that He can "part the sea" to a new era as we follow Him in faith. What is that new era?

- an era of re-invigorated spiritual vitality
- an era of unprecedented faith and zeal for following Jesus
- an era of ministry in which every person of God serves God but also serves others in specific ways
- an era in which He raises up leaders for expanded ministry
- an era of zeal for reaching the lost
- an era of reaching out to our community with compassion
- an era of working together to make disciples of Jesus by the power of God

What is that new era to which God wants to part the sea for us? God is putting many of these before us right now. It is time for us to step forward in faith and follow God through whatever sea He wants to lead us, not wandering and wavering, but moving forward in faith and in faithfulness . . . all the while remembering God's great love and faithfulness. Amen -- so be it.

Pastor Jim Eggert

Life And Death In The Tongue

A group of frogs were traveling through the woods, and two of them fell into a deep pit. All the other frogs gathered around the pit. When they saw how deep the pit was, they told the two frogs that they were as good as dead.

The two frogs ignored the comments and tried to jump up out of the pit with all of their might. The other frogs kept telling them to stop, that they were as good as dead. Finally, one of the frogs took heed to what the other frogs were saying and gave up. He fell down and died. The other frog continued to jump as hard as he could. Once again, the crowd of frogs yelled at him to stop the pain and just die. He jumped even harder and finally made it OUT.

You see this frog was DEAF, unable to hear the others' plea. He thought they were encouraging him the entire time. There is Power of Life and Death in the Tongue.

- An Encouraging Word to someone who is down can lift them up and help them make it through the day.
- A Destructive Word to someone who is down can be what it takes to kill them.

Be careful of what you say. Speak life to those who cross your path. It is sometimes hard to understand that an Encouraging Word can go such a long way.