



St. Paul Lutheran Church

“Your Refuge from the Storm”

# LifeGroup

May 12, 2024  
Acts 27:13-38

## Community

### TODAY'S THEME

In the final chapters of the book of Acts we encounter turning seasons, a long winter, pounding storms at sea, severe hunger, threats of death, a shipwreck and the near loss of hope. Through it all, Paul, under arrest and facing death, maintains a spirit of adventure. As we read about Paul riding out the storm, we gain helpful guidance for navigating our own faith adventure.

### WHAT DO WE WANT OUR SMALL GROUP TO KNOW?

We want to trust that God is guiding and leading us, even though it may feel as if we're in the middle of a storm.

### WHAT DO WE WANT OUR SMALL GROUP TO DO?

We want to reflect on the covenant relationship of our baptism and see God at work in daily activity, seek God's guidance and direction, be obedient to God even though it may seem dangerous and disastrous, and trust that God will provide what is needed each day.

### ICEBREAKER

At any given moment, there are an estimated 2,000 thunder-storms in progress over the earth's surface. These storms can vary from relatively mild rainstorms to very damaging storms featuring hail and high winds. Thunderstorms form when warm air rises from the earth's surface and moves upwards quickly into the colder levels of the atmosphere. If conditions are right, tornadoes can form from this rapid updraft. Normally, however, the result is rain, wind, lightning, and thunder (*learner.org*).

Have you ever been in the middle of a terrible storm? What did it feel like? How did you manage to get through it? Are you more cautious now because of that storm experience?

### PRAY TOGETHER

Father God, you are at work among us, and you work through us each day. Give us a deep understanding of what you are up to, and steer us in the direction of your plans and purposes. We know that life can be filled with dangers and disasters, but we want to obey your call and trust that where you guide, you provide. Amen.

## Content

*Read Acts 27:13-38.*

While the weather conditions were favorable when the ship set sail, they quickly turn violent. Our English word “typhoon” comes from the Greek word that Luke uses to describe the wind. At first the opposing currents of air created a whirling motion of both clouds and sea, but then the wind begins to blow steadily in one direction. Ancient ships lacked much ability to tack (i.e., follow a charted zigzag movement to make optimal use of unfavorable winds). When contrary winds arose, ships were mostly at their mercy and had to run away from land, out into the open sea.

Taking advantage of a brief respite, the crew ties down the lifeboat and “bands” the ship. This involves passing ropes (or chains) under the ship to hold it together. Pulled tightly in a transverse fashion, these cables would hopefully help hold the timbers against the tremendous force of stormy waves. The crew lowers their sea anchor, which creates drag and might slow their drifting. Finally, in desperation, the crew throws out all non-essential cargo. Chances are, the ship is taking on water. With a lighter load, the ship might ride higher in the water.

It storms for so long that the crew and passengers simply give up hope. Finally Paul speaks. He begins with a little “I told you so” speech, perhaps trying to reinforce their need for God's guidance. Paul gathers the ship's crew and encourages them with two promises from God: that he (Paul) has been guaranteed safe arrival in Rome; and that everyone sailing with him will be protected from harm. Ancient pagans believed that a true philosopher would hold consistently and calmly to his teachings even in times of great calamity. False prophets would crack under pressure. Paul's demeanor gives him credence.

Apparently even the centurion has begun to believe Paul. When Paul realizes that some crew members are planning to escape in the lifeboat, the centurion cuts the lifeboat free. The ship's crew and passengers are now utterly dependent upon the Lord for their salvation. Paul encourages the crew and passengers to eat, and Paul offers grace, again reminding everyone of God's presence and provision.

### DISCUSSION

On a scale of 1-10, with 10 being totally desperate, where do you think this experience ranks? What were some significant things the crew and passengers did as signs of their desperation? What are some specific things they did to demonstrate their trust in God in

this situation? If you had been onboard, how do you think you would have reacted?

### GOING DEEPER

While our daily discipleship may not be quite as adventurous as Paul's, Paul has much to teach us about living as a follower of Jesus in daily life. The truth is, we are all on assignment for God, each and every day. By looking at back at Paul's missionary adventures through Acts, we can see four guiding principles in Paul's life that are worth considering for our own:

#### 1. In every situation Paul asks, "what is God up to"?

Paul is aware of God's constant activity around him. In each and every situation, Paul keeps his eyes open for what God is doing. Most of us tend to keep our eyes on ourselves, especially in difficult circumstances, but Paul is always on the lookout for God at work. God's agenda guides Paul's daily agenda. In the midst of the storm, Paul senses an opportunity to point others to God's goodness.

### DISCUSSION

What are some examples in your own experience of asking this question?

#### 2. In every situation Paul listens for God's guidance.

Throughout Acts, Paul seems to be in constant prayer, asking for God's guidance and direction. Sometimes Paul seems to "get it wrong," but God always steers him right.

### DISCUSSION

What are some examples in your own experience of listening for God's guidance and direction?

#### 3. In every situation Paul is obedient, even when it isn't easy.

Even though Paul knows that the sea voyage will be dangerous, and even disastrous, he still gets on the ship. Even though Paul knows that the truth won't be well-received, he speaks it anyway.

### DISCUSSION

What are some examples in your own experience of being obedient even when it isn't easy?

#### 4. In every situation Paul trusts that God will provide what is needed.

Despite the violence of the storm, Paul trusts that God will provide safe passage. Paul seems to live by the axiom "where God guides, God provides."

### DISCUSSION

What are some examples in your own experience of trusting God to provide?

## Application

Talk about a storm you are currently experiencing. How can you be more trusting of God in the middle of this storm? How can you, as a small group, surround each other and support each other through each of these storms?

### PRAY TOGETHER

Father God, when the storms come, we tend to count on our own abilities or experiences to guide us. We feel alone and uncertain about the future. In the coming week, help us to trust your leading and guidance to take us through the storms we will encounter. Help us to be obedient when it seems dangerous and disastrous. Help us to believe that where you guide, you will provide. Go with us into the coming week, guiding and leading us deeper into your plans and purposes for each one of us. Amen.

### ADDITIONAL CONVERSATION AND REFLECTION

## *Telling Your Story*

### ACTS 26:12-18

As you've been reading through Acts, have you noticed how many times Paul tells the story of his conversion? In today's reading, Paul shares his story with King Agrippa. Even when Paul is under pressure to defend himself against false accusations, he takes the opportunity to share his story! How about you? Given the opportunity to share your faith story, would you be ready to stand and deliver? Chances are, your story is not as dramatic as Paul's, but we all do have a story to tell. How have you seen God active in your life? Why does the gospel matter to you? Those two questions can help you to begin to think about your story. And remember this: the real power of your story is not the drama, but the Spirit who lives in and through your story! You can trust that when you have a story to tell, God will give you opportunity to tell it.

Acts 27:13-38 NLT When a light wind began blowing from the south, the sailors thought they could make it. So they pulled up anchor and sailed close to the shore of Crete. (14) But the weather changed abruptly, and a wind of typhoon strength (called a “northeaster”) burst across the island and blew us out to sea. (15) The sailors couldn’t turn the ship into the wind, so they gave up and let it run before the gale. (16) We sailed along the sheltered side of a small island named Cauda, where with great difficulty we hoisted aboard the lifeboat being towed behind us. (17) Then the sailors bound ropes around the hull of the ship to strengthen it. They were afraid of being driven across to the sandbars of Syrtis off the African coast, so they lowered the sea anchor to slow the ship and were driven before the wind. (18) The next day, as gale-force winds continued to batter the ship, the crew began throwing the cargo overboard. (19) The following day they even took some of the ship’s gear and threw it overboard. (20) The terrible storm raged for many days, blotting out the sun and the stars, until at last all hope was gone. (21) No one had eaten for a long time. Finally, Paul called the crew together and said, “Men, you should have listened to me in the first place and not left Crete. You would have avoided all this damage and loss. (22) But take courage! None of you will lose your lives, even though the ship will go down. (23) For last night an angel of the God to whom I belong and whom I serve stood beside me, (24) and he said, ‘Don’t be afraid, Paul, for you will surely stand trial before Caesar! What’s more, God in his goodness has granted safety to everyone sailing with you.’ (25) So take courage! For I believe God. It will be just as he said. (26) But we will be shipwrecked on an island.” (27) About midnight on the fourteenth night of the storm, as we were being driven across the Sea of Adria, the sailors sensed land was near. (28) They dropped a weighted line and found that the water was 120 feet deep. But a little later they measured again and found it was only 90 feet deep. (29) At this rate they were afraid we would soon be driven against the rocks along the shore, so they threw out four anchors from the back of the ship and prayed for daylight. (30) Then the sailors tried to abandon the ship; they lowered the lifeboat as though they were going to put out anchors from the front of the ship. (31) But Paul said to the commanding officer and the soldiers, “You will all die unless the sailors stay aboard.” (32) So the soldiers cut the ropes to the lifeboat and let it drift away. (33) Just as day was dawning, Paul urged everyone to eat. “You have been so worried that you haven’t touched food for two weeks,” he said. (34) “Please eat something now for your own good. For not a hair of your heads will perish.” (35) Then he took some bread, gave thanks to God before them all, and broke off a piece and ate it. (36) Then everyone was encouraged and began to eat— (37) all 276 of us who were on board. (38) After eating, the crew lightened the ship further by throwing the cargo of wheat overboard.