

Sermon Series: Growing Pains—Lord of Life Lutheran, Westfield—8/20/2000

Title: “Growing through Weakness”

Text: Psalm 46

Introduction: *Illus.: Flawed but fruitful*

Theme: Weakness is not a character flaw in our life when it drives us to Jesus to find our strength in him and it can be one of greatest times of spiritual growth.

Times when we find that we are the weakest

C Caught up in the swirl of natural calamity (vs. 3)

1. When we feel the most vulnerable—sickness, storm, death
2. We forget that God is our help in “every time of trouble” and so run from one despair of the moment to another

C Overwhelmed by the warring madness of others around us(vs. 6, 9)

1. When we feel the most violated—corporate, governmental, judicial, “them, out there”
2. We let rage and anger brew as we carry the grudge far past today and give Satan a foothold (Eph 4: 27)

C Swamped by our own lapses of moral and ethical integrity

1. When we feel the most foolish—our own impatience, carelessness, laziness, selfishness brings on weak moment
2. *“Fool me once shame on you, fool me twice shame on me*
3. **ILLUS.: THE WEAKNESS OF THE GREAT WALL**

Growing through out weakness into the strength of Jesus

C Stand on the refuge that won’t be moved

1. **ILLUS.: SUPPORTED BY THE CROSS**

2. Nations, people, political parties, even our own church body can be lathered up in turmoil but if our focus and our hope is not in things or power or organizations but in God, we won’t be shaken
3. This unshake-ability comes from being connected to Christ’s body and grounded on His Word
4. *“As a result, we are no longer to be children, tossed here and there by waves, and carried about by every wind of doctrine..but speaking the truth in love, we are to grow up in all aspects into Christ, who is the head.”Ep4:14,15*

C Seek out the joy that keeps flowing

1. The reason we stay weak after a traumatic time of weakness in our lives is that we confuse *happiness* with *joy*
2. False joy comes when we try to find it in the gift (life, health, things) rather than in the GIVER
3. David understood that true, lasting joy—even the smile in the midst of my weakest moment—flows from God (vs. 4) to me and back to God and out to others
4. Ask yourself, “Am I trying to stuff myself full of joy and not succeeding or do I have enough joy that it spills out to others?---it matters on where your source of joy is
5. Jesus said, *“I have spoken to you that my joy may be in you, and that your joy may be made full.”* John 15: 11

C Quit wrestling and start resting in your Savior

1. *“Those who live in the shelter of the Most High will find rest in the shadow of the Almighty...He will shield you with his wings. He will shelter you with his feathers. His faithful promises are your armor and protection.”Ps91:1, 4*
2. Be *“still and knowing that God is God”* (vs. 10)
 - a. Several other translation use words like, “stop worrying,” “don’t be concerned,” “stop striving”
 - b. *“Worry does not empty tomorrow of its sorrow but today of its strength.”*
 - c. **ILLUS.: STORY OF JACOB WRESTLING WITH ANGEL OF THE LORD (GEN 32:22FF)**
 - d. Stop your whine and complaint long enough to hear God answering
3. Confident in Jesus Christ that *“the Lord of Armies is with us.”* (vs. 11)
 - a. *“God has said, “I will never fail you. I will never forsake you.” That is why we can say with confidence, “The Lord is my helper, so I will not be afraid. What can mere mortals do to me?” (Heb. 13: 5-6)*
 - b. *“Jesus Christ is the same yesterday, today, and forever.”* (Heb. 13: 8)
4. Bold enough to claim God’s strength as your (vs. 11)
5. **ILLUS.: A TIME TO BE SILENT**

Flawed but Fruitful

A house servant had two large pots. One hung on each end of a pole that he carried across his neck. One of the pots had a crack in it. At the end of the long walk from the stream to the master's house, the cracked pot arrived only half full. The other pot was perfect and always delivered a full portion of water.

For two years the servant delivered each day only one-and-a-half pots full of water to his master's house. The perfect pot was proud of its accomplishments, but the poor cracked pot was ashamed of its own imperfection, and miserable over accomplishing only half of what it had been made to do.

After two years of what it perceived to be bitter failure, the cracked pot spoke to the servant one day by the stream.

"I am ashamed of myself, and I want to apologize to you."

"What are you ashamed of?" asked the bearer.

"For these past two years I have been able to deliver only half my load because this crack in my side causes water to leak out all the way to your master's house. Because of my flaws, you don't get full value from your work."

The servant said, "As we return to the master's house, I want you to notice the beautiful flowers along the path." As they went up the hill, the cracked pot noticed the beautiful wild flowers on the side of the path. When they reached the house, the servant said to the pot, "Did you notice the flowers grew only on your side of the path, not on the other side? That's because I have always known about your flaw, and I took advantage of it. I planted flower seeds on your side of the path, and every day while we walk back from the stream, you've watered them. For two years I have been able to pick beautiful flowers to decorate my master's table."

Supported by the Cross

Visitors to the Smithsonian Museum of American History see the flag that flew over Fort McHenry when Francis Scott Key wrote the Star Spangled Banner in 1814. The original flag measured 42 feet by 30 feet. It was the immense size of the flag that allowed Key to see it from his position ten miles out to sea, following a night of gunfire.

The means by which a flag that large could fly on a pole 189 feet in the air is on display at Fort McHenry on Baltimore's inner harbor. There in one of the barracks are two oak timbers, 8 foot by 8 foot, joined as a cross. National Park Service personnel discovered this cross-shaped support near the entrance to Fort McHenry in 1958 buried 9 feet in the ground. Not only did the cross piece help rangers locate the original site from which the Star Spangled Banner flew, it answered the mystery of how such a large flag could fly in stormy weather without snapping the pole. This unseen wooden device provided a firm foundation for the symbol of our national freedom.

Similarly, the cross of Christ provides the foundation by which our faith is rooted and supported.

A Time to Be Silent

A pilot had turned off his radio in order to elude the enemy, but as he came across the channel, he turned it on again and began turning the dial to find the proper frequency, which changed from time to time. His plane was almost out of petrol, and he was terrified of what might happen if he ran out and did not find his way precisely toward the goal he was seeking. As he twiddled the dial, he broke out in perspiration. Finally, he caught a faint signal and adjusted the dial. The signal came in strong and clear. He changed his flight path onto the signal and landed safely at his airport.

We're all trying to do that in life. We're trying to pick up those signals that tell us who we are, what direction we ought to be headed, and where home is. As we fiddle with the dial and adjust the signal receiver in our lives, we begin to hear in the stillness and the quietness a voice telling us where home is. We are able to readjust our patterns and head homeward. That's the promise of the text. If we will be still, we will know that God is God; we will know which way goes toward God.

Food for Thought

Worry does not empty tomorrow of its sorrow, it empties today of its strength.

Psalm 46:1-11

¹God is our refuge and strength,
an ever-present help in trouble.

²Therefore we will not fear, though the earth give way
and the mountains fall into the heart of the sea,

³though its waters roar and foam
and the mountains quake with their surging.

⁴There is a river whose streams make glad the city of God,
the holy place where the Most High dwells.

⁵God is within her, she will not fall;
God will help her at break of day.

⁶Nations are in uproar, kingdoms fall;
he lifts his voice, the earth melts.

⁷The LORD Almighty is with us;
the God of Jacob is our fortress.

⁸Come and see the works of the LORD,
the desolations he has brought on the earth.

⁹He makes wars cease to the ends of the earth;
he breaks the bow and shatters the spear,
he burns the shields with fire.

¹⁰"Be still, and know that I am God;
I will be exalted among the nations,
I will be exalted in the earth."

¹¹The LORD Almighty is with us;
the God of Jacob is our fortress.

[NIV]