

**May 3, 2020**  
**Christians in the Storms of Life**  
**Our Church's 129<sup>th</sup> Anniversary**

Scripture reading: Matthew 7:24-27

Text: *“Therefore everyone who hears these words of mine and puts them into practice is like a wise man who built his house on the rock. The rain came down, the streams rose, and the winds blew and beat against that house; yet it did not fall, because it had its foundation on the rock”* (Matthew 7:24-25)

Dear Brothers and Sisters,

Many years ago one of my friends invited me to a Christian retreat that was organized by his church. We were at a retreat center here in Ohio. The topic for one of the morning teachings was, *“God’s goodness.”* At the end of the teaching I talked to a very kind presbyter of that church whom I got to know at the previous year’s retreat. He lost weight, since I last saw him, and his face looked pale. I asked him how he was doing. He told me that he had numerous health issues since we have last seen each other. He had surgeries. He also told me that in spite of the difficulties and serious health issues he got stronger in his faith in God. I asked him, “How were you able to get stronger in your faith when you had to go through all the difficulties?” He told me that while he was in the hospital many times he praised the Lord and professed that *“God is good, God is good, God is good.”* His words stuck to my mind and heart.

There are ups and downs in our lives. It may also happen that tests of our faith will come and only the foundations of our faith will sustain us. Unfortunately we are in a time of trial nowadays that challenges both faith and human strength. However, there were also challenges and trials in the past, and the strong faith foundation in God helped to sustain.

Today our church celebrates its 129<sup>th</sup> Anniversary. Our church was able to live throughout the years and decades by keeping the solid foundation of faith in Christ and the truth of the Bible. Additionally, the congregation elected pastors, chief elders, presbyters who endured in the good and bad days, whom we could refer to, *“the world was not worthy of them”* (Hebrews 11:38). We should thank those who were faithful workers of the Lord and fought in the difficult times of the past so our church would continue to stand strong. Although we are not physically together, but we may celebrate in our hearts and give thanks for the past 129 years.

How did our ancestors fight the good fight of faith? How could we be prepared for the difficulties? I do not think that anyone could provide a satisfying answer to these questions. However, I am fully persuaded stating that the same God whom we praise and worship in the light, is the same God we can reach for in the darkness. The Lord is there with us in this time of our lives when everything looks so unsecure and we are confused, when a “storm is raging” in our human lives. In His Son, Jesus Christ He has promised, *“Surely I am with you always, to the very end of the age”* (Matthew 28:20).

In our sermon today let us look at how to deal with the “storms” in our lives. I think it is a relevant topic, since a “storm is raging” around us. This pandemic creates great difficulties and ruins the life of many people. Where should we gain strength, hope, and persistence? What or who should be our main focus in these challenging times?

One time a pastor used a sermon illustration during the worship service. He took a large piece of blank white poster and made a black dot in the center of it with a marker. Then he held the poster up to the church and asked them what they see. One person quickly replied, “*I see a black mark.*” “*Right*”, the preacher replied. “*What else do you see?*” Complete silence prevailed. “*Don’t you see anything other than the black dot?*” he asked. A chorus of no’s came from the congregation. “*I’m really surprised,*” the pastor commented. “*You have completely overlooked the most important thing of all—the white sheet of poster.*”

In life we are often distracted by these “dot-like” disappointments or painful experiences, and difficulties. Many people focus on this pandemic nowadays and the fear that comes with it. However, do we see the “white sheet of poster”, the countless blessings and good things that we received from the hand of the Lord? For example, that the family is together, that we may work on our relationships, that we may be more attentive and thoughtful to each other, that we can enrich the life of the other person. What do you focus on during this time? On the blessings, the new possibilities, the good things, or on the problems, on this pandemic, or on your fears?

In our text we find that Jesus was telling a story about a wise man who built his house on the rock. The storm came, but the house stood firm. Jesus was telling His disciples that everyone has storms in this life. The house, we heard about in the text, was that man’s who obeyed the Word and was faithful, but was still in the storm. Sometimes the Lord Jesus calms the storm around us. However, there are times when He lets the storm rage and calms the believer in the meantime, He strengthens his or her faith, and encourages him or her to be more thankful.

Everybody may get into situations where they get discouraged and lose heart in the difficulties and trials. Even the apostle Paul got discouraged because of the many troubles in Asia. He burned out and felt of giving up on life. He wrote this, “*...in our hearts we felt the sentence of death. But this happened that we might not rely on ourselves, but on God...*” (2Corinthians 1:9). When the problems come, though they are already here, let us not rely on our efforts, thinking that we will be able to fully take care of ourselves, but let us have faith, hope, and trust in our Lord God, because **He is good!**

As you struggle with things in your life and the storm comes, whether in your family, job, health, finances, car, house, even in this pandemic, then God can use all this to change your desires, your attention so you can focus on what really matters. The trials may serve as opportunities to prove what you believe in the Lord Jesus Christ, and your life will not be shaken when you place your life onto the solid foundation of Jesus Christ. Amen.

Yours in Christ,  
Rt. Rev. Dr. Csaba Krasznai  
Pastor