3-20-22 – PEACE IN THE STORM – Acts 21:27-40

Good morning! How many wore green on St. Patrick’s Day? St. Patrick flourished in the 400s. At age 16, he was kidnapped from Britain and taken as a slave to Ireland. He escaped back to Britain and later returned to Christianize Ireland. Like St. Patrick and St. Paul, we sometimes go through terrific storms in life. But Jesus gives us peace in the storm as we look to Him. How many have felt God’s peace during a stressful time?

1. **v 27-32 Stay humble when attacked, falsely accused or misunderstood**

Here we see some Jews from Turkey, where Paul had planted at least 4 churches along the Roman Road there. These Turkish Jews must have heard of Paul’s work, because, before Paul could complete his purification by offering the sacrifices, these Jews seized him and accused him of making the Temple unholy and teaching against the Old Testament law. They had seen one of Paul’s helpers, who was not a Jew, and jumped to the conclusion that he had entered the Temple in violation of Temple rules. How many of us have jumped to a wrong conclusion? How many of us have felt attacked, falsely accused or misunderstood? One reason to stay humble when we are falsely accused or misunderstood, is because we’ve all jumped to conclusions when we didn’t have all the facts. We never have *all* the facts, so it’s wise to ask the Lord to help us stay humble. What’s our first reaction when we feel attacked, falsely accused or misunderstood? What are some things we can do to calm ourselves down? A quick prayer and a deep breath, relaxing our muscles, or counting to 10 may help us calm down, so we respond well. HeartMath.org explains the science of how our hearts send more signals to our brains than the brain to the heart, and when our heart is in sync with our brain and our nervous system, we are able to think rationally and respond from compassion. HeartMath.org also provides exercises and coaching for getting our systems in sync. 1st, breathe deeply, focus on your heart, and then picture your heart radiating feelings of gratitude or compassion. With Jesus’ help we can learn to live in a place of peace, no matter the storm swirling around us. Also, be alert to accusations against God’s workers. Don’t jump to judgment or spread rumors about others. Get to the truth before you speak or keep your mouth shut and pray. **With Jesus’ help, what else can we do when we feel attacked or misunderstood?** Keeping our mouths shut and listening go a long way to untangling misunderstandings. We can listen, look for underlying emotions, areas of agreement and truth. What was the rioting crowd’s underlying emotion? One area of agreement Paul had with them was that the Temple was holy. It’s interesting that when they dragged Paul out of the Temple, immediately the Temple gates were shut to protect the holy place. One underlying truth in what they were saying was that the Old Testament Law is God’s Word. Thus, we learn from Paul to **First, stay humble when you feel attacked, falsely accused or misunderstood.**

1. **v 33-36 Trust God to provide protection in the midst of the storm**

For Paul, God used Claudius Lycias, who was the senior Roman official in Jerusalem and commander of 600 Roman soldiers, to protect Paul by arresting him and carrying him up the steps of the Antonia Fortress, which was built by Herod the Great in 19 BC. Purim was last week when Jews **read** the book of Esther **& rejoice** in God’s protection. How many remember the story of Esther, a Jew who was made queen of Persia (Iran), and because of her uncle’s faith and action, was able to petition the king to allow the Jews to defend themselves on the day, selected by lots (purim), they were to be killed? Jews for Jesus has 10 missionaries in Ukraine, at the border feeding refugees, praying for them and Ukrainian soldiers, and handing out New Testaments. They are also in Kharkiv, which is ruined as badly as it was in WWII, doing what they can to help people leave active combat areas, buying food, finding gas to fuel cars, to drive women and children to the border. As of March 14, none of the missionaries or their families have been killed or even injured. That is God’s protection, due to prayers including ours. God’s protection may not look the way we would like, but let’s keep the big picture in mind. What’s the worst that could happen to us? There have been mass shootings, looting and riots across our own nation in recent times. We can pray and get involved in solutions as God leads. But even if we die, we go to heaven with Jesus forever. **2ndly, Trust God to provide protection in the midst of the storm.**

1. **v 37-40 Trust the Holy Spirit for wisdom to know what to say if anything**

Here, we see the wisdom that the Holy Spirit gave Paul, first to speak Greek to the commander. He was surprised that Paul could speak Greek, the common language of the Roman empire, for the people living in Israel at that time spoke Aramaic, not Greek. The commander had assumed that Paul was the Egyptian fanatic who had led 4000 assassins into the wilderness. The Greek for *assassins* is a word for the type of small dagger carried by the sect of Jews who were violently hostile to Roman rule. But Paul was an educated Jew from Tarsus, a Roman city in Turkey. So, he knew Greek. Paul also knew Aramaic. The Holy Spirit gave him the wisdom to ask the commander if he could speak to the Jewish mob. The Holy Spirit also gave Paul the wisdom to speak to the crowd in Aramaic. The Hebrew language had been replaced with Aramaic during the Babylonian captivity in the 4th century BC. For more than 1000 years Aramaic was spoken by Jews. It is a miracle that God restored the Hebrew tongue to the Jewish people and it is now spoken in Israel. What is a word you know in another language? Learning Spanish enabled Keith and I to pastor in PR. One of the reasons we give out the Jesus DVD in so many languages is that the world has come to America. I just discovered that a 50-year-old dry cleaner in Lemoyne had been sold to Muslims. So, when I went in & picked up my wool things, I gave a tip, and a Jesus DVD to the cashier, silently praying that he and his family will watch it in their heart language and be saved. The only thing I said to him was that I wished to thank him for their friendly service. We can pray for the Lord to set up divine appointments and then to guide us. **Lastly, ask and trust the Holy Spirit for wisdom to know what to say, if anything.**

**In Summary, First, we learn to stay humble when attacked, falsely accused, or misunderstood. Secondly, we learn to trust God to provide protection in the midst of the storm. Lastly, we learn to ask and trust the Holy Spirit for wisdom to know what to say, if anything, during life’s storms and every day. Let us pray.**