

## Trusting God in The Face of Trials and Tribulations

Over the course of the summer, Faith United hosted an online Book Club. Week by week we read the book *Priscilla: The Life of an Early Christian*, by Ben Witherington III. This book is a historical fiction account of the life of Priscilla, an early Christian leader from back when Peter and Paul were still alive and sharing the word of God. Priscilla and Aquila, her husband, were a team of equals—a married couple who dedicated their life to fostering the future of the church, sharing the good news of Jesus' love with people who were both alike and different from them. They are mentioned six different times in the New Testament and were close friends of the apostle Paul.

The evangelism (sharing of the good news) that this couple were able to accomplish in Jesus' name is shocking, because they faced massive hardship every day. Citizens of the city of Rome, they were Jews who had become Christian, so they faced hatred and disdain from their Jewish friends who didn't believe in Jesus and from their Roman friends who believed in the Roman gods. Their lives were at risk constantly, as the Roman Empire was working hard to crush the Jesus movement at its roots by killing its leaders. They watched their friends get crucified, beheaded, and even mauled by lions (this is what led to Aquila's death). The Jesus movement, Christianity, shouldn't have survived that trying time. It should have been squelched.

And yet, against all odds, God's mighty love prevailed, and the church only grew in years to come. It survived those times of trial and survived many other seasons of trial to follow: plague, natural disaster, the Reformation, scandal, secularization. God created the church on earth for a reason—to proclaim God's everlasting promise of love and grace—and the church still had work to do. God has always preserved the church for that work, and always will. In the face of such great hardship Priscilla and Aquila (and others like them) found strength to persevere by placing their trust in God and by reading scripture. It was the lyrics of the Psalms, the inspiring letters of Paul, and the conviction of the Gospel authors that kept them inspired to continue sharing the good news of Christ's love with others, against all odds.

2020 has been an outrageous year in our life together. We have faced unimaginable and unanticipated hardship, grief, and challenges this year, and we will continue to do so. This pandemic has ravaged our life as we know it, impacting our work, our relationships, our economic stability, our mental health, our worship, and so much more.

In the face of these trials that continue to rage around us, God is calling us—you and me—to discipleship. We, like Priscilla and Aquila, are called to place our trust in God's ability to preserve us through this season of life. God has a plan for us, plans to use our hearts, minds, speech, and action to share God's good news in the world right now. The world needs a word of hope, and God is calling on us to provide it.

I invite you to reflect this month on how God might be calling you to share this word of good news. Will you invite friends to church? Will you read the Bible with your family? Will you volunteer to share your gifts at church in a new way?

As you reflect on God's call in your life in this season, I invite all of us to spend some time praying the words of Psalm 91. Let these words guide your prayer this month, giving you new strength to trust God's power in your life for the sake of the gospel.

Against all odds, God has preserved us, and will continue to preserve us, dear ones.

Thanks be to God. Amen.

In Peace, Pastor Marissa