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## **Tuna Boat Thanksgiving** II Samuel 22

Earlier this year I was invited to go fishing for tuna. They do not catch tuna in lakes or rivers. They catch tuna in the ocean. They do not catch tuna on the banks of the ocean..but waaay out there. El Nino had brought the tuna in closer to shore but it was still a good 80 to 100 miles out into the ocean. The idea was to drive down to Newport Oregon and catch the tuna boat at 11:00 at night. We would then have a very restful nights sleep in the downstairs hold, while the Captain chauffeured us out 80 miles to where we would wake up to tuna fishing in the morning. We arrived at the dock and it was an incredibly calm evening, no wind, warm, beautiful. My first portent of things to come was the deck hands off hand comment. This is what you call the calm before the storm. All went well as we headed past the breakers and onto the open sea. It had become a little rocky but hey this was a boat on the ocean right? I was tired so I went down below to catch some shuteye. I had a difficult time getting used to the motion of the boat. There were no windows so I tried visualizing myself in a ski boat on a sunny day with the boat bouncing up and down. It helped to think about something I was familiar with. Because by then the weather had started getting rough, the tiny ship was tossed. 10 foot swells. I had to wedge my foot into the bunk in order to keep from rolling off the bed. I was desperately praying to God and trying to sleep. I kept reminding myself of the seaworthiness of the boat and the experience of the Captain and crew. In the middle of the night, I got up to see how things were going and I noticed that the galley was filled with men. Tired men. Very white and sick looking men. I asked them. Are we almost there. Nobody answered, they just kind of stared back at me. It did not help my own stomach to see other guys retching over the side. When I began looking at all the other guys who had lost their dinner in the midst of the storm...it made me feel like losing it. Anything I could do to focus on things I knew to be stable and true, and not on others who had succumbed to the effects of the storm...focusing

on stable things and what I knew to be true helped me withstand the storm.

Do you feel like you are down under water in the bottom of a tuna boat experience? Is your life rocking and never seem to stop? When you look around, do all you see is people giving in to the effects of the storm? Do you feel on the edge? You can't hold on much longer else you too will be overwhelmed by the waters?

Several thousand years ago there was a man who was right where you are at. He understood exactly how you feel. He was on the edge of being drug under. But he didn't go under...why? It wasn't because he was something special or great. It certainly wasn't because he had never blown it in his life. He had done some major mess-ups. This guy was able to give thanks in the middle of his tuna boat storm. Amazing. Turn with me in your Bibles to II Samuel 22. This passage is placed toward the end of David's life. He writes a song. It's repeated in Psalm 18. It's a Psalm he wrote while being chased in his earlier life by Saul. While in the difficult storm of being chased by Saul, David needed to focus on true things that he knew were stable. He was coming off a terrible battle with his son Absalom, a famine in the land and wars with the Philistine. Verse 15 of the preceding chapter tells us that David was weary, exhausted, wiped out. How can we renew our strength when we are exhausted? When our boat keeps rocking and it doesn't seem like it will ever stop. All we feel like doing is staggering to the edge of the rail and...

David calls to us in our tuna boat experiences and invites us to thanksgiving. What do we have to be thankful for when we are about ready to lose it? David refocus our attention off of the waves. Off of others around us who are losing it, and onto the only truly stable thing in the world. READ verses 1-20.

David begins by affirming His God publicly. He wrote it in a song for all to hear. No doubt by those around David as to his opinion of God. V.1-4. Look at my God. He is worthy of praise. He is my Rock, my Refuge, my fortress, my savior, my stronghold, my Deliverer. God wants to hear us. We need to hear ourselves praise Him. Others need to hear us affirm the strength of our God in the midst of our storm.

Point number one. Give thanks, for God is an ear of understanding in the midst of our storms. Sometimes we need someone just to listen.

God wants to hear our praises. God also is very comfortable hearing and listening to the difficult stuff of life. God wants to hear about our storms. Verse 4ff. Violence, drowning, death destruction, overwhelmed distress. I cried to God. Verse 7. He HEARD me. We can give thanks to God in the middle of our storms because we have a God who listens. God wants to hear from us. Not only the praise directed things but the difficult stuff. God can handle it. He wants us to pour out to Him in genuine, transparency, honesty. We can be honest in our tragedy before God. Too often I think we struggle with this. We get sucked into a chin-up spirituality. We don't let God or anyone else know we are drowning until we think we've recovered. We only mention that we almost drowned when we can say, I'm OK now, I've recovered. I don't struggle with that anymore. I now have the eternal perspective on that matter. Why do we do that? We have convinced ourselves that if we truly were a "good" Christian then we wouldn't struggle with that problem. We wouldn't be feeling like that. We wouldn't be thinking any of those thoughts, attitudes. Folks if God can hear and respond to David's cry..he can hear mine too. David affirms God's refuge and protection yet all the while genuine enough to admit. I feel like I'm losing it. I going under, overwhelmed. God is an ear of understanding in the midst of our storm. Verbally pray back Psalms to Him. Affirm His greatness. Focus on what you know to be true and stable and right and just. Call on the One who can do something about it. Prayer that is practiced underwater knows a perspective of God that is immediate and personal.

Look at verse 20. I love this verse. He rescued me, because He delighted in me. Eugene Peterson's paraphrase the message puts it this way. "I stood there saved..surprised to be loved." God delighted in me. David is surprised by the way God moves, His passion and power. Verse 8-20 God moving is likened to a natural disaster for his enemies. God's moving is compared to an earthquake, a volcano, thunder, lightening, windstorm. No one can ignore it's power. No one can deny it's effects or force. If you've ever been in a 5 or better earthquake, everyone feels it shake. No one can tame God's power. An awesome winter storm affects everyone. One must either get out of its way or submit to it. We can have great confidence knowing the powerful God who listens to us is on our side and all must take notice and respond.

God delighted in David, and he stands rescued and surprised. We hear that and ask, Why? Why would God choose to be delighted in me? He knows me. He knows my mess-ups and weaknesses. He knows when I blow it. God can't possibly delight in me. David sounds so pompous when he asserts, My God delights in me. What if I were to come up to you and say, God is simply overjoyed with me. You wouldn't probably say this but you would think. Hey buddy, get a little perspective. I know you too well you are not perfect. I know when you have had bad attitudes, said some things you should not have.

David was not prideful when he said "My God delights in me...because he knew that God's delight in Him was not based on his performance, it was based on God's choice. God delights in us not because we are a great guy and perfect. Look at verse 22 in His sight, before His eyes, God chooses to ignore the evil of those how have forgiven and confessed. He delights not in what we have done or not done, but in what He has done for us. He loves to see the heart of obedience that He has nurtured in us.

God delights in me. Not based on me but based on God. It would be helpful for us to say it together to help convince us of that. Say that with me, "God delights in Me." Say it to your neighbor "God delights in me." It was uncomfortable wasn't it. That's because we have a faulty view of God and faulty view of ourselves. Nothing you do can make God love you any more, and nothing you do can make God love you any less. God does for David what he never do for himself.

As you read through verses 21-25 it sounds like a salvation is granted for works of obedience. But that is not the issue. For God so loves the world. There are no stipulations or conditions on that. He hates sin, but he still loves those who are prisoners of that sin. He anxiously desires to be the Light that pushes out the imprisoning darkness in our lives. Benefits come to those who are in the light. Natural result of living life in God's plan is that life will be much better that those in darkness. Note, I did not say it would necessarily be easier. Better is not always easy. Point #2 Give thanks, for God is a light in the midst of our darkness. The way we do life, the way we live affects who we are. God's grace does not exempt us from right living. In the middle of our storms we must turn to the light. God is a light in the middle of our darkness.

Do it right. Turn to truth. When we are drowning in a tuna boat experience, our natural instinct is to drown our pain and sorrow and confusion with activity, stimulants, depressants, pleasure, stuff, food, business. Most of us have no problem believing or relating to all the calamity stuff that David talks about, but we have trouble with God delighting in us. In the middle of our darkness we look in our mirror and see only the flaws.

Superstar model Cindy Crawford was quoted by the USA Today saying that almost every morning she's gets up and looks in the mirror, disgusted at what she sees. Some mornings it takes all she has to get out of the house. Here we have one of the most physically beautiful women in our land disgusted with the way she looks. She looks in the mirror and all she does it look at the flaws. She spends all her time trying to hide her flaws. We are like that too. When we install carpet, we walk in the room and we look right at the seam that is so obvious to us. Others walk in and say, Wow that is beautiful. We look to see how well the seam is hidden. We have trained ourselves to look for flaws in the mirror, so we think that Almighty God whose observation skills are much better than us, must see even more. We do not see ourselves as God sees. "before His eyes.."David is looking at himself as God sees not as Himself.

Give thanks to God because He is a light in our darkness. God sees us in a very different light than we see ourselves. God reveals Himself, He shows Himself to those who genuinely seek Him in faith. verse 26, He shows Himself to the blameless. In verse 24 David calls himself blameless. not perfect but before God there is no blame. He has kept short accounts with God. God shows Himself to those who are pure. Keeping down those barriers of sin that come between you and God. God reveals Himself to those who are marked by humility. There is nothing like pride to put a bag over your head to the light. Pride will blind you to the light. Pride will leave you unavailable, unable to see the light around you. Do you want to see less of yourself, less of your flaws and less of your talents, proficiency, less of your weaknesses and your strengths...less of you and more of God? Read verse 29 with me. For thou art my lamp O Lord. You illumine my darkness." God I want my darkness illumined. I want my confusion made clear. I need some direction and vision in this area. There is great fear of what may happen

in this area God. God be my light. Illumine my darkness and confusion. Give thanks, for God is a light in the midst of our darkness.

Point #3 God is a key of freedom from our personal prisons. Look at verse 30 "By my God I can leap over a wall" The light illumines our darkness helping us to see and conquer the barriers that are blocking our way. We are given strength to conquer the enemy. We can run against a troop. David is no longer in a protective, defensive, refuge and fortress mentality. He is running and leaping. He is no longer under the waters drowning in calamity. He is motivated because He has recognized the Light that delights in Him. What a freeing place to be. He has experience the freedom of forgiveness that God delights to give. He is walking in the light. He is doing it right. In the path of the light of truth, David can now see the hurdle, identify the enemy and jump over them. They no longer stop him or trip him up. God is a key of freedom from our personal prisons. In our searching for flaws, some of us will accept God's forgiveness. Yes, God forgives me. But we fail to really believe that because we don't ever forgive ourselves. We continually beat ourselves up about that skeleton in the closet that we have asked forgiveness for long ago, but we keep feeling so guilty about it. We refuse to fully accept forgiveness.

We have graded certain sins as blacker than others. We excuse some sin. We struggle with the idea that all sin is equal in god's eyes. Why? Satan is the accuser. If he can accuse us again and again and again, he will be able to drive a wedge between us and God. He will cripple us into a long-term, unnecessary self beating guilt. People, some sin has greater consequences than others, but all sin is sin. If your guilt continues beyond confession, then that guilt is not from the Spirit of God. I John 1:9 If we confess our sins He is faithful and just to forgive us our sins and to cleanse us from all unrighteousness. Forgiveness is based not on us. Even on our future performance in that area. He is faithful and just to forgive. It is based on God's decision to forgive. When we are filled with post confession guilt, we're doubting God's faithfulness and justice. The story of redemption is all about God forgiveness us. God does not hide from the reality of our sin, but chooses to send it away, viewing us as one bought by the sacrifice of His Son. Colosians 2:13 You were dead in your trespasses, He made you alive together with Christ.

Hebrews 10:22 Let us draw near to God with a sincere heart in full assurance of faith, having our hearts sprinkled clean from an evil conscience and our bodies washed with pure water..for He who promised is faithful. We cannot ignore sin, discount it or minimize it's affects. We must deal with it. Keep short accounts and move on. Psalm 139:23 Search me O God and know my heart, try me and know my thoughts. See if there be any wicked way in me and lead me in the everlasting way. Lead me in the way of light, of truth, of freedom from my personal prisons. Lead me in the everlasting way.

Give thanks to God for He is an ear of understanding in the midst of our storms. Give thanks to God for He is a light in the middle of our darkness. Give thanks to God for He is a key of freedom to our personal prisons. By my God...I can leap a wall. Acknowledge that God has forgiven you, even forgiven those skeletal sins that haunt you. Confess your failure to believe God's faithfulness and justice by guilty thoughts. Refuse unjustified guilt and leap over the wall to the freedom and life that God in Christ offers. Jesus said, I have come to bring you life and life more full and abundant.

Point #4 Give thanks, for God is our Rock of hope when the future looks fuzzy. Verse 31. His way is perfect. His Word is tested. It's been tried over and over throughout the centuries. When followed it has never failed. Never disappointed. When our future looks fearful and fuzzy and confused, God is our Rock of hope. Follow Him and you will not be disappointed.

One of the greatest characteristics about David is not about David but about God. David lived, breathed, believed, cried to God. David noticed that everything was in God's hand. God prepared David for what lay ahead. Look at verses 35-42. trains, prepares , strengthens, skilled, enlarged my steps. I did it well because of you. David was a warrior. He killed his enemy. David gives credit to God who gives strength. God is at work right now preparing us. God will rekindle our passions and refocus our motivations. He prepares us for what will lie ahead. Verse 50. Therefore. I will give thanks to Thee.

There are some people here this morning that need this Word from God. They need to hear this because they are in the middle of a tuna boat storm. Their life is being violently rocked. They need to hear from

Jesus the calmer of storms. God is saying to you this morning. I want to replace your terror with Thanksgiving. I want exchange your depression with My delight. Your confusion with my compassion. Your weariness for worship. We can give thanks to God just knowing that He hears us. God has an ear of understanding for us in the midst of our storms. God is a light in the midst of our darkness. He is a key of freedom to our personal prisons and a rock of hope when the future is fuzzy.