

KING OF KINGS LUTHERAN CHURCH



John 6:68-69

Things Aren't Always What They Seem

As Moses was debating with Pharaoh about releasing the Israelites from their slavery in Egypt, God gave Moses a miracle to perform to convince Pharaoh that Moses was sent from God. In our first lesson, Moses and Aaron performed the miracle. Aaron threw his staff onto the ground and it turned into a snake. As we read in our lesson, Pharaoh's magicians were able to do the same. We're not sure how, but it was probably a work of Satan. Interestingly, the Hebrew text uses different words for the snakes. Aaron's was a regular *snake*. Pharaoh's magicians produced *monsters*. It seems that they one-upped Aaron. Or so it seemed.

The events in life can often seem too big — *monsters*. In our text from John 6, Jesus' popularity was plummeting. His popularity peaked at the feeding of the 5,000. But on the next day, **“many of his disciples turned back and no longer followed him.”** It was a sudden turn of events that could have left the disciples wondering if they should follow Jesus either. If everyone else was leaving, should they leave too? Were they wasting their time by following Jesus?

Peter's answer is a good response for us to consider. **“Lord, to whom shall we go? You have the words of eternal life. We have come to believe and to know that you are the Holy One of God.”** In the Word of God we see a truth that is greater than what our eyes may see. The *monsters* that our eyes see are tiny compared to the power and promises of God.

Some of the troubles we face seem almost random. There is no logical reason why the trouble came. Like a storm blowing in from the ocean, you often have no control over what is happening. In those moments we may feel tiny and powerless. You cannot make the storms go away. It is not a result of anything you did, but a test from God. Regardless, the problem remains and the pain won't go away.

On the other hand, sometimes we create our own monsters because we are the monster! Paul's

struggles in Romans 7 seem all too familiar. He wanted to do good. He wanted to stop committing sins. But his good intentions didn't always materialize. He often did the opposite of what he wanted to do.

Our sinful habits cause us all sorts of pain, don't they? Nagging guilt is a horrible voice to hear. Yet, many Christians allow a sin control them. For some there isn't even much of a struggle, but they give into the sin. Sometimes the solution is equally difficult to bear — admitting our failures to God or to others.

Some sins occur because we don't struggle against this sinful world as we should. Instead, we take the easy path and repeat the selfish behavior or accept the greedy attitude.

These sins can be like an open wound that hurts just to touch. We try to ignore the pain, but sometimes the double-edged sword of God's law touches our hearts and reminds us of our sins. And it hurts! The monster of sin seems too large to tame.

How do you think that Moses and Aaron felt when their snake was outnumbered and outsized? Was there a moment in which they thought, “Lord, you sent us here and now we look stupid!”? There hope seemed dim.

Isn't that how we often feel from the troubles of life and the guilt of sin?

With one sentence, Moses tells us the quick outcome to the monsters vs. Aaron's snake. **“But Aaron's staff swallowed up their staffs.”** It must have been an fascinating event to witness. Multiple snakes were swallowed by Aaron's snake.

As the disciples watched the crowds leave and as they heard the grumbling about Jesus' teachings, it must have seemed like things were going in the wrong direction. Not only were the crowds leaving, but Jesus didn't soften the blow. In our

text he concludes with a warning that may have turned even more people away.

Peter's answer is a remarkable example of faith. All seemed bad; but they knew that only Jesus had the words of eternal life. Only he was **"the Holy One of God."** What seemed bad wasn't bad because Jesus was still Jesus!

The faith and words of Peter are the solution to the monsters we face in life. The Holy One of God, Jesus Christ himself swallows the monsters that threaten us.

In 1 Corinthians 15, the Apostle Paul quotes a verse from Isaiah that says, **"Death has been swallowed up in victory."** In the context, it isn't just death, but sin too has been destroyed. Jesus' death on the cross paid for the guilt of your sins. Every bit of judgment and punishment was placed onto Jesus for the sins of the whole world. The guilt that seems so real, is not! Christ has taken away your sins. The Christian Church exists to proclaim that truth to you. It isn't something you hear once and remember forever. Because of our on-going failures and the attacks of the devil, we need to hear this message of forgiveness over and over.

With sin gone, death is truly swallowed up and gone. Jesus' resurrection is proof! Death that seems to be a raging, unstoppable monster is swallowed in Jesus' victory.

The Holy One of God also has words to help us with the monsters that appear out of nowhere and are not our own doing. Those aches and sorrows and the things we seem to lack are answered by the promises of God. Jesus promises that we will lack nothing in this life. When it seems that others have more blessings or fewer sorrows, look by faith to the promise of God's love for you. God must work for your good!

In our Second Lesson, Moses is held up as an example of living his faith. Moses had been adopted by Pharaoh's daughter. He enjoyed the luxury that came from being part of the royal family. But by faith he saw more than earthly riches. He saw the promises of God and was willing

to be identified with God's people and with God rather than enjoy an easy life.

We often fall into the trap of thinking that we would be happy if only we had . . . that one more thing! But by faith can you see the greatness of what Christ has already given you? Moses saw it. So it the disciples in our text. The Word of Christ was enough for them. Life was complete and had significant meaning through faith in Jesus.

Your life has purpose and meaning too. Even with the troubles that you wish would go away or the things you think you lack, you are complete in Christ. You are ready to serve him in a meaningful way in the place he has set you. God's Word gives you that promise! Living by faith in Jesus, we know that we can overcome the sorrow and heartache of this world. Jesus promises to use everything for our good. Even as we linger through sickness or problems, Jesus will not leave us.

In the earliest days of the age of great cathedrals, the master builder and stonemasons had to work for a lifetime, knowing that the work would be completed by the next generation. Without the machines we take for granted, the construction of a cathedral could span the lifetimes of three or four master builders. Although the early workers knew they would never see the completed project, I'm sure in their minds they saw a finished product.

With "the Holy One of God" on your side, life is far more than what it seems. Look by faith to the Word of God and you will see the truth. The monsters are swallowed in the victory of Christ. Amen.

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