

Good Shepherd, August, 2021

Night Scenes

Acts 20:7-12

It was a warm summer Sunday. It was the 9:30 service at Grace Lutheran Church in San Carlos, AZ. While I was preaching, I heard a strange noise in the church. Someone had fallen asleep and was snoring. Other people heard him, too, for they were looking toward the front of the church trying to locate the person who was snoring loudly. I knew who it was. His name was Arnold Long. He was a member of the Church Council. He was sitting in the second pew right in front of me!

His wife was trying her best to wake Arnold up, but it wasn't working. I stopped for a moment to give her another chance and she succeeded, Arnold woke up and later apologized for causing such a disruption during the service.

Have you ever fallen asleep in church? I think it's probably happened to most of us at some time. Our *night scene* today takes place in a city called Troas and there we meet a young man who was **Lucky to be alive!**

Paul was on his third missionary journey and stopped at Troas where there was a gathering of Christians. Paul had spent time here before and knew the members quite well. It was Sunday evening and people came for fellowship.

- They began with a meal, something like our pot-luck dinners.
- Then they celebrated their unity in the Christian faith by means of the Lord's Supper.
- Then Paul delivered his farewell sermon. He taught the people, probably warning them of spiritual dangers, and

encouraging them in their faith. He didn't expect to see his friends again.

It got late. It was about midnight. Paul was still speaking! Some have made fun of Paul and said, "He just couldn't find the period to his sermon." But if you study the life of Paul, it doesn't seem as though he was a dull speaker; I would imagine that his sermon was a "feast for the spiritually hungry."

There was a young man there named Eutychus. The service was being held in an upstairs room. It was probably crowded because Paul was well-known. There were also many lamps in that room, much like our candles. The room became quite stuffy.

Eutychus was probably a good listener, but he was also a human being and he fell asleep. Unfortunately, Eutychus was sitting in an open window, three stories up. He fell out of the window, to the ground, and died.

How do we know that Eutychus was dead? The man who wrote the book of Acts was Luke, and he was there that evening; Luke's occupation was that of a doctor.

You can imagine the commotion in the room when people saw Eutychus falling from sight. If Eutychus' parents, family, or friends were in the room, you can imagine how people were reacting. Paul left the room, ran down stairs and outside where the young man was laying.

And just like the prophets Elijah and Elisha had done, Paul hugged the young man and then said, Don't be alarmed, he's alive! By the power of God the soul that had left the body of Eutychus returned to it! He was alive!

This night scene from Scripture is important for three reasons.

First, this miracle confirmed the apostleship of Paul. Many people doubted Paul's authority to teach the gospel because Paul had persecuted Christians earlier in his life. By this miracle, the Lord Jesus was saying, "Paul is My spokesman. When you listen to him, you are hearing Me."

Second, note the day the Christians met for worship and were celebrating the Lord's Supper – Sunday. It seems by this time in the early church, that it had become the custom to worship publicly on Sunday.

As Christians, they, and we, are free to choose any day of the week for worship. Any day is made holy by the use of the Means of Grace. Undoubtedly the choice of Sunday as the day of worship went back to the happenings of Easter Sunday when Jesus arose from the dead. But the Holy Spirit also came to the Church in a powerful way on Pentecost Sunday. And remember that the Trinity began creation on Sunday.

Friends, they say that exercise is good for the human body, well, hearing God's Word is good exercise for the soul. Make use of that privilege regularly.

Third, the raising of Eutychus from the dead strengthened the Troas believers in their faith. They knew that since God could make the dead live again, that one day God would do the same for them – take their souls to heaven and raise their dead bodies on the last day. Faith in the promises of our Lord, give us the confidence to look forward to eternal life in heaven! I know that my Redeemer lives is not just the name of an Easter hymn, it is our unifying hymn of praise.

The name Eutychus means "lucky." Eutychus was not lucky to be alive; he was alive because of God's grace. We don't know what became of Eutychus, but I have a feeling that one day we will meet Eutychus in heaven.

It is not luck that the Father sent Jesus into our world to be our Savior. That was God's plan. It was not bad luck that Jesus died on the cross. That was God's plan in action! It is not luck that we are believers in Jesus as our Savior. That is a gift of God. We are believers in Christ because the Holy Spirit was able to give us faith in Jesus and nurture that faith through Word and Sacraments, It is not luck that we will be in heaven. It is the grace of God.

Since God has loved us so much, let us remain faithful to the Lord who loves us.