

26-1011a - Detailed Summary

26-1011a - *There Is Always Something*, Tom Freed

Bible Readers: Mike Mathis and John Nousek

See the transcript: [Transcript HTML](#) - [Transcript PDF](#)

There Is Always Something

Scripture Readings

1st Reading (0:04 - 1:11): Mike Mathis

Genesis 47:7-9: Mike opened the service with the first scripture reading from Genesis 47:7-9. Joseph brought his father Jacob in and set him before Pharaoh, and Jacob blessed Pharaoh. Pharaoh asked Jacob how old he was. Jacob answered that the days of the years of his pilgrimage were 130 years. Few and evil had been the days of the years of his life, and they had not attained to the days of the years of the life of his fathers in the days of their pilgrimage. Mike concluded by noting that this completed the reading of God's word.

2nd Reading (1:12 - 2:18): John Nousek

2 Corinthians 12:7-10: John greeted the congregation with a good morning and presented the second scripture reading from 2 Corinthians 12:7-10. Because of the surpassing greatness of the revelations, and to keep Paul from exalting himself, there was given him a thorn in the flesh, a messenger of Satan to torment him, again to keep him from exalting himself. Concerning this, Paul implored the Lord three times that it might leave him. The Lord said to him that His grace is sufficient, for power is perfected in weakness. Most gladly, therefore, Paul would rather boast about his weaknesses so that the power of Christ may dwell in him. John closed the reading with Amen.

Summary of Transcript (0:04 - 23:00), Preacher: Tom Freed

(2:17-5:02) Intro: There Is Always Something & the Ordinary Shape of Life Under the Sun

Tom greeted the congregation and noted that it was his turn in the rotation again. He announced the sermon title as "There's Always Something." He explained that he usually preaches on things he deals with, so it feels as though there is always something. There is always something—not sometimes, and not only in a hard year. Something is always there: an ache that will not quite leave, a bill that shows up the week one thought everything was clear, a person who is wearing one down, a body that will not stay fixed, or a plan that looks simple until it is started. One thing gets settled and another shows up before the relief has time to settle in. It often feels as though only days pass between problems. One finally feels good, and not long afterward something else happens. This is not pessimism; it is the ordinary shape of life under the sun. Scripture has been saying this longer than any of us have been living it.

Job 14:1 puts it plainly: a man that is born of a woman is of few days and full of trouble. Jacob, standing before Pharaoh at 130 years old, did not dress it up either. He said the days of the years of his pilgrimage were 130 years; few and evil had the days of the years of his life been, and they had not attained to the days of the years of the life of his fathers in the days of their pilgrimage (Genesis 47:9). Jacob had covenant promises and had seen the work of God, yet he still called his days few and evil. If he called it that, what chance do we have? The back finally eases and two days later the knee goes, and that is not the end of the list. Tom said he wanted the congregation to look honestly

at this reality. Life under the sun is full of trouble. That trouble is not strange for the Christian, and God has already told us what to do with the thing that will not leave.

(5:02-7:27) Scripture's Honest Description of Life and the Experience of an Aging Congregation

Scripture does not flatter us about life in this world. Moses, in the only psalm attributed to him, says the days of our years are threescore years and ten, and if by reason of strength they be fourscore years, yet is their strength labor and sorrow, for it is soon cut off and we fly away (Psalm 90:10). Labor and sorrow is not a footnote; it is a normal description of life. Ecclesiastes says the same thing from another angle. Man does not know his time; as the fishes that are taken in an evil net, and as the birds that are caught in the snare, so are the sons of men snared in an evil time when it falls suddenly upon them (Ecclesiastes 9:12). The verse before it says the race is not to the swift, nor the battle to the strong, neither yet bread to the wise, for time and chance happen to them all.

Careful people still meet trouble they did not schedule. Faithful people still bury people they love. Honest workers still watch a simple job turn hard. Aging people watch a list of what hurts get longer, not shorter. This is especially plain in a congregation that has lived a while. Many have issues. The older one gets, the more one seems to have. One condition is treated and the doctor names another. The spouse declines. Money that was finally under control gets hit by something that was not planned. None of that means God has forgotten the church. It means we are still living in the world Job and Jacob described.

(7:27-10:34) Tribulation Promised, Not Strange;

Sources of Trouble in a Fallen World and from the Enemy

Jesus did not promise His disciples a clear calendar. He told them the opposite: in the world you shall have tribulation, but be of good cheer; I have overcome the world (John 16:33). Mark that order. Tribulation is promised. Cheer is commanded. The ground of the cheer is not that the tribulation leaves. The ground of the cheer is the One who has already overcome the world from which the tribulation comes. Peter wrote to brethren who were already under pressure: Beloved, think it not strange concerning the fiery trial which is to try you, as though some strange thing happened to you (1 Peter 4:12). The trial feels strange when it lands, but Peter says do not treat it as strange. It is part of the path, not proof that one has left the path.

Some of the trouble is simply the fallen world. Bodies break, wood rots, water turns, economies shift, and people sin against each other. Genesis 3 is still in force. The ground brings forth thorns, and so does a good bit of ordinary life. One can do the work carefully and still meet something underneath that one did not know was there. Some of the trouble is the devil. If the devil cannot keep a man from Christ, he will spend what God permits trying to wear him down after that. The devil cannot stop us from becoming a Christian, but he can make it as difficult as possible. He can irritate us and do whatever God permits him to do. Job is the clearest picture we have of that. God set a limit, and inside that limit Satan took the oxen, the servants, the sheep, the camels, the children, and finally Job's health. Job's friends then made it worse by explaining his suffering back to him as they understood the counsel of heaven. They did not understand, and most of the time neither do we. Do not do their work for them. A hard week is not a verdict one is qualified to pronounce on oneself. There is not a verdict one is qualified to pronounce on the brother next to him. If one sees somebody struggling, do not be like Job's friends. Job was better off probably with no friends than with what they were telling him.

(10:34-13:24) Paul's Thorn: The Enemy Strikes, God Governs, and Grace Proves Sufficient

Paul knew a version of this that would not leave. To keep him from becoming conceited because of the surpassingly great revelations, there was given to him a thorn in his flesh, a messenger of Satan to torment him. Three times he pleaded with the Lord to take it away from him (2 Corinthians 12:7-8). He calls it a messenger of Satan. He also says it was given, and the purpose he names is that he not be exalted above measure. Both of those things can be true at once. The enemy strikes; God governs the blow and uses it. Everybody has a plan until they get hit. The Christian life is no different. One can have the week mapped, the budget set, the project scoped, and the health feeling steady, and the punch lands. The question is not whether the punch is coming. The question is what one does once on the ground. That is a quote from a boxer: everybody has a plan in boxing until they get punched. That is how it is in life sometimes. One has all these plans of what one wants to do, thinks everything is going great, and all of a sudden gets hit out of nowhere.

Paul asked three times for the thorn to depart. The answer he received was not the answer he asked for. The Lord said to him, My grace is sufficient for thee, for My strength is made perfect in weakness. Most gladly, therefore, will I rather glory in my infirmities that the power of Christ may rest upon me (2 Corinthians 12:9). That is one of the hardest sentences in the New Testament to actually believe while the thorn is still in. We want departure. God often gives sufficiency instead. Some things leave when we pray. Some things stay. And the staying becomes a place where His strength is proved. Paul did not pretend the thorn felt good. He did not call the weakness pleasant. He did decide that if the power of Christ rested on him inside the weakness, he would rather have that than a smooth life that left him trusting in himself.

(13:24-15:33) Why Trouble Is Permitted and the Fruit It Produces When Faith Stays Put

This is also why some of the troubles are permitted in the first place. A life with no thorn, no bill, no limitation, and no recurring grief can quietly train a man to live as if he did not need the Lord. Trouble interrupts that. It does not feel like mercy while it is happening. It feels like interference. But more than a few of us would not be in Christ if life had stayed smooth. Tom shared that part of the reason he turned to God was because he was struggling. He had a lot of problems that he needed help with. Even now, he feels like half the reason we have all these issues is that we still trust in God, still go to Him in prayer, and still rely on Him to take care of us. The frustration that drives one to pray is not wasted, even when the frustration itself does not leave on one's schedule.

James says, count it all joy when you fall into various trials, knowing that the testing of your faith produces patience (James 1:2-3). He does not say that the trial feels like joy. He says count it joy because of what the trial is producing in a faith that stays put. Romans 5 says tribulation works patience, and patience experience, and experience hope, and hope makes not ashamed, because the love of God is shed abroad in our hearts by the Holy Ghost which is given unto us. A chain only works if we do not quit in the middle of it. Patience is not produced by a trouble that ends before it has done its work.

(15:33-18:47) What to Do When There Is Always Something: Points One through Three

So what do you do when there is always something? First, stop reading the latest trouble as proof that you are off the path. John 16:33 already told you tribulation is coming. First Peter 4:12 already told you not to treat the fiery trial as strange. A hard week is not a verdict on your faithfulness. It

may be the ordinary week of a disciple who is still in the world.

Second, take the thing to the Lord more than once, and receive the answer He actually gives. Paul asked three times. We ought to ask, and we ought to ask specifically. Pray about the need, the bill, the diagnosis, the work that will not cooperate. Then be ready for the answer to be “My grace is sufficient” rather than “It is gone.” Sufficient grace is not a slogan for an easy week. It is a supply for a week that has already gone sideways. It fills the vacuum. If it stays, ask what obedience looks like while it is still there. Removal is mercy, and sufficiency is also mercy. Do not despise the second because you asked for the first.

Third, refuse to let the latest thing become the whole story. Paul could speak of glorying in infirmities without pretending they were pleasant because he knew where the power rested. Romans 8 does not deny the groaning. Creation groans, we groan, and the Spirit groans with us. The chapter still ends with nothing able to separate us from the love of God which is in Christ Jesus our Lord—not tribulation, not distress, not persecution, famine, nakedness, peril, or the sword (Romans 8:35-39). The something that is always there is real; it is not ultimate. Paul says the light affliction which is but for a moment works for us a far more exceeding and eternal weight of glory, while we look not at the things which are seen but at the things which are not seen (2 Corinthians 4:17-18). An aging body makes the contrast sharper, not weaker. The days are few, the trouble is full, and the glory on the other side of faithfulness is heavier than both. It is a lot we are going through—a lot of trouble, a lot of pain and suffering—but it is nothing compared to heaven, where we will not have the pain and suffering.

(18:47-21:12) Points Four and Five: Small Obediences and No Retirement from Faithfulness

Fourth, practice the small obediences the latest frustration tries to cancel. Contentment is not the absence of irritation; it is the decision inside the irritation not to let it set the terms. Be careful for nothing, but in everything by prayer and supplication with thanksgiving let your requests be made known to God. And the peace of God which passes all understanding shall keep your hearts and minds through Christ Jesus (Philippians 4:6-7). That peace guards the heart even when the circumstances do not move on your schedule. Speak the truth about the trouble. Jacob did, Job did, and Paul did. Then do the next faithful thing. Show up and finish the work that you can finish. Sit with a person who is not improving. Open the scriptures when you would rather rehearse your issues. Assemble with the saints when the week has already taken more out of you than you want to give.

Fifth, remember that the Christian has no retirement plan from faithfulness. The body slows and the list of trouble grows, but the assignments we have do not expire. We work while it is day. Be steadfast, unmovable, always abounding in the work of the Lord, forasmuch as you know that your labor is not in vain in the Lord. Moses was 80 when God sent him back to Egypt. The thorn did not end Paul's ministry; it traveled with him. The something that is always there may change what you can do. It does not cancel the call to keep doing what you still can, unto the Lord and not unto men. Even with the issues, we still have to do what we can. We still have our duties as a Christian. It did not stop Paul, and it did not stop Moses.

(21:12-23:00) Conclusion and Invitation

In conclusion, a man that is born of woman is of few days and full of trouble. Jacob was right to call his years few and evil. Paul was right that the fiery trial is not a strange thing. He was also right to

ask for the thorn to leave and right to glory in the weakness when the answer was grace instead of removal. Scripture tells you that trouble is coming and that it is not a strange thing, and it tells you grace is already measured to the size of your thorn. God's strength is made perfect in weakness. The days of trouble are not the end of your journey. So get up. The punch has already landed or it will, and there will be another one after that. The Lord who kept Paul on his feet with a thorn that will not leave is the same Lord who walks with this congregation through the aches, the bills, the diagnoses, and the week that did not go the way you planned it. God's grace is sufficient for the something that is always there.

Tom then extended the invitation. If you are not a Christian, this invitation is for you. But he thought everybody present was a Christian, so if you have something that has gotten heavy, a burden or issues you are going through and you need the prayers or anything, now is the time to come forward.