

# A Word on Wednesday from Pastor Tonia

## "The Obstacle's the Way" 5/4/22

*I was with you in weakness and in fear and much trembling.* (1 Cor 2:3)

We often look at someone else and think, they've got it so easy. They've got it all, health, home, and happiness. We don't see the burdens they carry, the blood, sweat and tears they shed getting to where they are, the losses they've endured. We just see the stuff they've accumulated – and we're jealous. If only I had what they have.

Steven King, king of the horror story, now – he has got it made. He has sold millions of books, his stories have been made into movies, everyone knows his name. We think he came out of the shoot a best-selling author. Not so fast. In his memoir he says, "The nail in my wall would no longer support- the weight of the rejection slips impaled upon it. I replaced the nail with a spike - and went on writing." I'd say he got as good as he is because he didn't give up, he overcame the obstacles and he but kept on improving. It's skill and tenacity not luck which made him who he is today.

How can rejection be a good thing? "How can I live through rejection?" we ask. God tell us He never leaves us when we're down. Over and over again, God tells us to not be afraid, to never forget we are not alone, He is with us. God strengthens and comforts us. He doesn't promise to take away the obstacle, but He does help us get over it – if we but continue in the race.

Life is filled with hurdles we have to overcome. Hoops to jump through. Tests to take, test we have to pass. Boundaries we are to live within. Laws to follow. Bullies to best. An assignment which seem impossible, but is ours to do and to accomplish. Bad stuff happens. Just when we think we have it made our house burns down, we are given a diagnosis we don't think we can face, we lose a job, a loved one, a sure thing. But God tells us to not be afraid, He is with us and these things are not going to destroy us. God will comfort us and these obstacles will make us stronger.

Even a bad road can lead to somewhere wonderful. When faced with a difficult situation, an event out of our control, we can remember God's words of love and promised of presences. God sent His Holy Spirit to us to comfort us, to strengthen us, to guide us through the waters of chaos and fires of destruction.

We don't always get the life we dream of or wish for. Things go sideways. Roman Emperor, Marcus Aurelius appeared to have it made in the shade, but he didn't want to be emperor, he was satisfied with his studies. I think he would rather have been a philosopher and spoken words of encouragement to those who found themselves in times of difficulty. But no, the crown fell to him. He found the power of the position a heavy burden. He wrote, "At first I thought I was unlucky this happened to me, but now I see it was a gift." His philosopher teacher Rusticus corrected him, "The job of emperor was a gift, because you made it one."

Marcus Aurelius tells us, "The obstacle is the way." That is how he lived. Shortly before his time, Jesus the Christ, the Son of God put aside all the trappings of divinity to become human. To live as one of us, to face obstacles. To walk uneven terrain, to face both joy and sorrow, to live and laugh, to cry and to be abandoned and denied. To die and to be raised from the tomb. He should have had it made in the shade, but He endured Good Friday so we could celebrate Easter morning. The obstacle IS the way.

Christ's life, death and resurrection are a gift, the gift which gives us forgiveness, love, and eternal life.

What will we make of our difficulties? What will they make of us? Will we turn out the lights and jump into bed and pull the covers over our head or will we turn to God for the fortitude to face the hurdle, the test, the job, the loss? This choice is ours. We can quit or make the most of it. I can't promise it'll be easy, but I know with God's help we can accomplish things we never thought possible. We can arrive on the other side and know we are there because God is with us.

Our lives can witness to the love of God, because we don't give up. We don't let missteps or misadventures defeat us. We have the ability – in God – to do the next thing, to continue, to find joy in our sorrow. We can make it through the obstacle courses.

**Please pray with me.** God of constant presence, thank You for being with us in weakness and in fear and much trembling. You encourage and strengthen us. Thank You for Your Holy Spirit who comforts us and gives us the ability to overcome the obstacles which try to hinder our ability to be the people You created us to be. **Amen**