

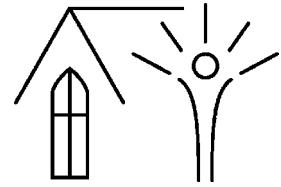


**ROSELLE**  
UNITED METHODIST CHURCH

206 S. Rush Street  
Roselle, IL 60172  
(630) 529-1309  
www.RoselleUMC.org

*Our Mission Statement:*

*“To Know Christ,  
To Grow in Christ,  
To Show Others Christ”*



January 7, 2007

## Sermon: “Spiritually Inconvenient”

Isaiah 43:1-7

Reverend Thomas Kim

Let us pray. *Come Holy Spirit, heavenly dove, with all your quickening powers. Come shed abroad a Savior’s love and that will quicken ours. Amen.*

A young man who had made it big had been away from home a long time traveling to exotic places all over the world. He had not been very attentive to his widowed mother. His conscience began to bother him and he decided to do something about it. He sent her a unique gift, a rare South American parrot for which he'd paid \$1200.

Well, time went by. Two weeks, three weeks, and he heard nothing. And the fourth week he called. When he got his mom on the phone he said, “Did you get the bird I sent you?”

“Oh yes!--It was so nice, I cooked it the day after it came. It was delicious!”

“You cooked it! Mom, that was a rare South American parrot. It cost me \$1200. That parrot could speak five languages.”

“My goodness, son,” the mother responded. “If only you'd said something.”

If only! Have you said that before? I didn’t do it, if only I knew....

Phyllis watched a documentary during her science class, and was so impressed that she talked about it over and over. She insisted that we should turn off the heating in the house, turn off the lights, and use less hot water while taking shower to prevent global warming. The list goes on and on.

A youth Sunday school teacher lent her the movie and all the family watched it. We felt so bad afterwards. We were all disturbed spiritually, and even felt guilty. Then she insisted to walk to her school in the morning at 7 a.m. Because she has to cross Irving Park, and other busy streets, I agreed to walk with her in the morning to her school when it is not raining nor snowing nor extremely cold. The movie, *An Inconvenient Truth*, made my life little bit more complicated.

Today’s reading from the 43rd chapter of Isaiah, says, “*When you pass through the waters, I will be with you, and through the rivers, they shall not overwhelm you. When you walk through fire, you shall not be burned, and the flames shall not consume you, for I am the Lord your God, the Holy One of Israel, your savior.*” Honestly, sometimes this Bible passages make me feel awkward and uncomfortable. Why does God have me pass through the waters (could be ocean), the rivers, and fire and says, “Fear not?” Why can’t God the Almighty the Creator of heaven and earth keep me away from any trouble if he can protect me from them? I name this uncomfortable status of my spirit, “Spiritually Inconvenient.”

To understand God, I would like to invite you to remember the beginning part of the country's history. Our country is much older than we think. Four centuries old. The year 2007 is the 400th anniversary of the first English colony in the "New World."

Don't be confused, now. This milestone has nothing to do with the signing of the Declaration of Independence in 1776. Instead, this anniversary goes all the way back to 1607 when the first permanent English colonists arrived in Jamestown, Virginia, beating the Pilgrims to the New World by 13 years.

Do you know one of the three ships that brought the colonists to Jamestown was *Godspeed*? The word *Godspeed* comes from the Middle English word "spede," which means "prosper." So to wish someone *Godspeed* is to wish that God will help them to prosper, or cause them to succeed.

The ships were just 88 feet long — about the length of a double tractor-trailer — and had a top speed of about 4 miles per hour. The colonists endured what we would consider to be intolerable conditions on a ship with 13 crew members working on the deck and 39 passengers stuck in the cargo hold with 40 tons of supplies.

The smell? It would have made grown men cry.

Imagine yourself on board a ship, pulling out of London on a cold winter day, December 20, 1606, and sailing the Atlantic for nearly five months to get to Virginia. Today, you can jet to London in six hours.

Finally, you sail into the Caribbean. The island of Dominica becomes your first landing site, and from there you hop to the Virgin Islands, where you do some hunting and fishing. According to the records of John Smith, the most famous passenger aboard the ship, made so from the movie, *Pocahontas*, you feast every day on iguanas, tortoises and pelicans, as well as "Parrots and Fishes."

Delicious.

You sail north in search of Virginia, but find that your destination is not so easy to reach. Although your calculations indicate that you should be there, you search for three days, but see no land. Then a violent storm strikes your ship, and you have to drop sail and ride it out. There, all crew and passengers could be washed into the sea and drown.

But God is with you, and you are driven by the wind into the mouth of the Chesapeake Bay. On April 26, 1607, you make landfall at Cape Henry, and then on May 14 you finally reach your destination — Jamestown. You have been delivered by *Godspeed*, a ship whose name means "May God cause you to succeed." That's a good name to keep in mind as we begin our 401st year.

Today's passage from Isaiah 43 contains a promise from God: "*When you pass through the waters, I will be with you*" (Isaiah 43:1-2). This is the kind of promise that the crew of the travelers in their ship must have lived by, especially as violent winds howled around them and towering waves crashed over the deck of their ship.

Water is a metaphor for chaos like a stormy ocean. It's a fierce and fear-inspiring force. In the face of such danger, God reaches out to us with the assurance, "When you pass through the waters, I will be with you; and through the rivers, they shall not overwhelm you" (v. 2). When you move through the thing that scares you the most in the spiritually inconvenient moments— "I will be with you," says the Lord. When you struggle through job loss, school failure, personal betrayal, disease, depression or divorce — "they shall not overwhelm you." God promises to give us help and protection and peace, in the face of the worst terrors and trials that life can throw at us. As we are being hit with the most daunting of personal challenges in the most spiritually inconvenient moments, the One who formed us promises to preserve us. There is a crisis and struggle before you, and it is spiritually inconvenient, however, God's promise follows you!

A man at a party walked over to a woman and said, "You're wearing one of the most beautiful diamond rings I have ever seen." She responded, "It's the Chapman diamond, and a curse comes with it." Taken aback, the man asked, "and what is the curse?" The woman's face clouded as she replied, "Mr. Chapman, who gave it to me." That's a telling commentary on life. Sometimes the price we pay for things is too great. And it's not always as obvious and dramatic as the curse of the Chapman diamond. The world presents better thing first, and then worse things follow it.

However, when we have an operation, we hear from a doctor saying that after the surgery you will experience some pain and may be some side affects, and that slowly you will be able to move around, and eventually you will feel much better. This is spiritually inconvenient. You suffer first, before you get better.

It's only when we "pass through the waters," when we encounter the rough water, when we feel spiritually inconvenienced. How do you live a spiritually inconvenient life? Is this a life in which we really believe that God will help us to succeed? A life in which we are convinced that the Lord who created us is going to care for us? The colonists on the little ship believed this, and they were driven by the wind into the mouth of the Chesapeake Bay and finally able to reach their destination, Jamestown.

Pastor Dave Norman says that it might be a good idea to ask our people whether they're in calm or troubled waters right now. Calm water is often a relief and can be a respite from the storm. But you can't get too far sailing in calm water. It's only when you "pass through the waters," when you encounter the rough water. Why is God present in the crisis? Because you can't get anywhere in calm waters. It is Spiritually Inconvenient!

How about us? Right here. Right now. In the year 2007 ... not 1607.

If we keep faith in God that will give us success. If we rely on his care for us through the waters, the rivers and fire even though it is spiritually inconvenient, he will offer us good fortune. This is Godspeed living. This is what it means to be God's people, in the face of any obstacle, any failure, any challenge, any terror, and any trial. That's the right direction to head as we sail out onto the uncharted waters of the year 2007 though it is spiritually inconvenient.