

(Running the Race to the End)

- *God's care and provision in the midst of terrible loss - symbolism of breaking bread...*

Introduction

- Last time saw how **hope** was restored in a situation of despair
 - tonight see how **rescue** is given from certain destruction
- Situation: in midst of a raging storm, heading west from eastern Mediterranean towards the foot of Italy/Malta...

Narrative notes:

- it had been quite a long time - 14 days!
- grain (v.38) would have been **food stores**, rather than cargo; emphasises how much at the end they felt themselves to be, even with a glimmer of hope, that they'd throw away their food....
- *(see images of cargo vessel)*
- anchors (v.40) would have been dead weight and dangerous on a sandy beach - this was the final act of the drama, and they knew it
- ropes holding the rudders (v.40) would have been lashed during the storm to avoid breaking loose
- foresail rather than the main sail (v.40) - that couldn't have been raised because the tackle was already overboard!
- when they became stuck on the sandbank - danger was they'd be pounded to pieces
- and worse, soldiers planning on killing prisoners...

Physical Provision

- A strand that runs through this narrative is God's concern for the well-being, **including the physical well-being**, of people:
 - the importance of food is mentioned (v.33,34) - we need to watch that too
 - the importance of time off, of recuperation time, are alluded too (v.33, "suspense") - we need that too
 - equally God concerned for our health, our exercise, our life-balance stuff... **do we take care of ourselves?**
- Another strand that runs through here is how **God uses human contributions to work out his plans**:
 - he is minded to rescue the folk on this ship...
 - but he uses the crew (v.30-32)
 - he uses the skill and hard-work of those who prepare the ship for the ordeal of being crashed onto the beach (v.39-40)
- A final, "physical" strand is how **God smiles on our care and concern for one another**:
 - in Paul, and in the centurion, we have examples of people who were concerned not just for their own well-being, but for the well-being of those around them (v.33, 43)

Spiritual Provision

- In days past - and perhaps in other parts of the Christian family today - it would have been common to **"spiritualise"** everyday events
 - to see a spiritual meaning or example behind every detail of life
 - not really my style, I don't think!
- But here I think we have Scriptural warrant for seeing in the physical events of the rescue from the storm a reflection of God's greater and grander rescue plan:
 - are there not echoes of something greater than a mere storm rescue as Paul takes bread and breaks it, giving thanks to God? (v.35)

- God is concerned for our whole beings...
- has Paul spoken of why he is on the boat, of where his confidence and hope comes from? Surely he has!
- has he spoken of Jesus' sacrifice on the Cross?
- has he even explained the broken bread and wine shared at the Christian communion celebration? Quite possibly...
- and so, as he stands on deck in the midst of the storm, bearing down on an unknown shore, on a ship unable to save itself, breaking bread is Paul not pointing also to the greater rescue that came at the Cross?
- for that is where God's care for our whole being is most clearly seen
- and so the hidden hand of God is revealed... God is only referred to here as Paul gives thanks...
- but the point Luke is making as he records these events is that God saves, from sin just as much as from storm...

Conclusion

- *image: Cross*
- Do we give thanks to God for the Cross?
 - do we see in God's goodness to us day by day a reflection of God's rescue on the Cross?
 - as we see in God's goodness to us day by day, are we reminded to give thanks to God for the Cross?