

“Everything Is Awesome”

Isaiah 40:27-31

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I am grateful to the church that I and my family were able to take some time off for vacation and bond together last week. My family enjoyed three days at Legoland in San Diego and had a fun time tent camping at Pismo Beach State Park campground on the way home. Honestly, full three days at Legoland were very challenging. To tell you the truth, my wife and I had to take several Advil pills for soothing our sore bodies and had to sleep in and recuperate for a couple days after we returned home. Joshua, our house early bird, got up early last Thursday and tried to wake us up saying, “Are you still sleeping?” It means, “Can you play with me again?” It is a sweet but haunting voice!

Originally we planned two days trip to Legoland because I had two free day tickets. But sometimes, my wishes don't go as expected. I realized that I left the free tickets home when I was driving down to Bakersfield area. I had to purchase new tickets for three day pass because it was a better deal! There are times that we encounter unexpected challenges. For example, I bought two portable propane gas tanks for the camping stove but I realized that I didn't bring the stove when I arrived at the campground. Then on Thursday, we went Kayaking at Lake Tahoe. My boys were super excited about kayaking at Lake Tahoe but I realized that I forgot to bring paddles! There are always challenges as we go on our life's journey. The most important thing is to search for meaning and a clear reason why we continue on this path of life first!

What truly surprised us was during the three days at Legoland was to discover my boys' super excitement, hyper energy, strong will and never ending tiredness to play from “the rising sun until going down of the same”! On the second day, we went to Legoland Water Park, while I was helping Joshua put on his swim suits in a changing room, he excitedly started to sing the Lego' movie theme song:

*“Everything is awesome, everything is cool when your part of a team
Everything is awesome, when you're living out a dream
Everything is better when we stick together”*

No wonder the boys were so excited to have a fun day. The more fun they had, the more fatigue and tiredness we experienced! We have driven 500 miles for almost 8 hours and my boys kept asking and checking every five minutes, “Daddy, are we there yet?” But they never complained but they were patient enough to wait for full fun! While looking at their blissful and happy smile, I

suddenly asked a question to myself, “What in the world brings them super excitement and keep their energy up without tiredness?” It was Legoland, *their ultimate reason and meaning* for their tolerance and persistence! And finally they fully enjoyed their time there! This metaphoric image of our trip to Legoland spiritually inspired me to think about the purpose of our spiritual journey on earth. ***What will keep us excited, fun and hopeful despite of the challenges in life? God! The answer is simple and clear that our God is love and He is in us!***

Viktor Frankl, a psychiatrist who survived an Auschwitz concentration camp during World War II, wrote a book, “*Man’s Search For Meaning*” (1946). In his book, he claims that if we can find our meaning of life, that is the reason that we can survive. Frankl said that it was the love that sustained him. It gave him a purpose for which to live. He survived four camps, and when he inherited the worn clothes of an inmate who had been sent to the gas chamber, he found in the pocket a torn slip of paper, a page from the Hebrew Prayer Book. On it was the main Jewish Prayer, *Shema Yisrael*: “Hear, O Israel, the Lord our God, the Lord is one.” Frankl took this as a sign that he was to live his faith and to help the other inmates around him find purpose in their lives.¹ He concluded in his book that the meaning of life is found in every moment of living; life never ceases to have meaning, even in suffering and death. He recalled his desperate endeavor to search for meaning and find reasons to survive in the concentration camp when there seemed to be no life meaning in a situation: He writes:

[He concluded that]The truth that love is the ultimate and the highest goal to which man can aspire... I understood how a man who has nothing left in this world still may know bliss, be it only for a brief moment, in the contemplation of his beloved.”²

Frankle emphasizes the importance of meaning in life. If we are clear for the meaning and reason for life, no matter what challenges we are facing, we can still stand up and go on forward. He said, “Everything can be taken from a man but one thing: the last of the human freedoms—to choose one’s attitude in any given set of circumstances, to choose one’s own way.”³ Frankle said, “Everything can be taken from a man but one thing: the last of the human freedoms—to choose one’s attitude in any given set of circumstances, to choose

¹ An excerpt from Rev. Heather Leslie Hammer’s sermon script, “Blessed to Be a Blessing” (Lynnewood United Methodist Church, CA, preached on January 29, 2017) <http://lynnewood.org/> Accessed July 14, 2017

² Ibid.

³ Ibid.

one's own way.”⁴ Like my boys, legoland represents their ultimate reason and meaning for their patience. Even they wouldn't take a nap on the way because they were so excited.

Today's Scripture wisdom reminds us who our God is through the Prophet Isaiah's voice. Like Israelites' lament, when we travel in our life journey, we sometimes encounter unexpected life challenges. ***How can we move forward when life doesn't seem to have purpose or meaning?*** When we deal with life challenges, it is still our freedom of choice whether we will try to find God's spirit. It is our choice to rely on God and humbly ask for strength, courage and hope to survive and go through suffering and adversity. The prophet Isaiah gives us hope that those who wait for the Lord shall renew their strength, they shall mount up with wings like eagles. This is what we believe and the way that we keep our faith.

I want to go back to my kayak story. When I didn't bring kayak paddles, I thought that I couldn't do kayaking. A lady kindly offered to share her paddles with me so that I was able to enjoy paddling. In turn, I had my son sit right in front of me and we sailed in the lake. Especially my younger one Joshua was so excited and asked me to go far as possible as I could pointing at the mountains far ahead of us. There were strong winds and high waves to move forward, but he wasn't afraid!

Kayaking wasn't only a fun experience for entertainment but also it was a great spiritual metaphor to describe our life and faith. As we paddled our boat, we had to maneuver our ways and face the challenges of waves. Those symbolize our life difficulties, sufferings or any type of adversities. Our goal is to survive and keep the boat floating on the surface of water and move forward to a direction where we want to go. We are like Joshua, three year old baby in a kayak who heavily relies on his father for guidance and protection. But he didn't have any fear to go forward because his father was always with him. If we give our full trust in God, we can find the meaning of life. And God will keep us safe and helps us survive. This is what Emmanuel, the compassionate God who loves boundlessly and we stick to Him in faith. As Joshua joyfully hummed the Lego movie song, we can also sing together:

Everything is awesome and everything will be cool when we are part of God's team! And everything will be better when you will stick together with God! Amen.

⁴ Ibid.