

April 25 2022

VALPO CHAPEL SPEECH

GOOD MORNING TO ALL. I WOULD LIKE TO EXTEND MY THANKS AND APPRECIATION TO PASTOR JIM, CHRIS AND THE STAFF HERE AT VALPO CHAPEL FOR ALLOWING ME THE OPPORTUNITY TO SPEAK WITH YOU TODAY AND SHARE MY STORY OF GODS GRACE AND MIRACLES WHICH SO MANY HAVE WITNESSED DURING MY ILLNESSES AND RECOVERY OVER THE LAST 7 YEARS. THIS ALSO GIVES ME THE OPPORTUNITY TO FULFILL THE REQUEST FROM JESUS IN 1 PETER 3:15 HONOR CHRIST AND LET HIM BE THE LORD OF YOUR LIFE ALWAYS BE READY TO GIVE AN ANSWER WHEN SOMEONE ASKS YOU ABOUT YOUR HOPE!

My name is John Collins, I am a meteorology student here at Valpo. I first enrolled in the university in 2000 and eventually left to pursue a career from which I retired in 2020 after 35 years. In this career God began his walk with me and ensured I was in the right place at the right time, fulfilling his promise found in Isaiah 12:2 Surely God is my salvation; I will trust and not be afraid.

After leaving northern Indiana I moved to Fort Myers Florida and eventually transferring to my company's HQ near Dallas Texas. It was here God's mercy and grace appeared in full. On September 29, 2014 at the age of 53 I survived a stroke caused by a dissection of a looped carotid artery, which I never knew I had. There was a Baylor hospital close to my home there with a world-class neuro response unit. God made sure I was there when I needed them! God continued his walk with me over the next several years as I developed additional health concerns, including CTEP related to blood clots in my lungs restricting oxygen flow into my heart. I also developed sepsis while in a hospital, and have continuously battled with kidney stones and procedures to remove them. After having multiple seizures I was also diagnosed with pulmonary embolism. While the tsunami of bad diagnoses was crushing, especially while fighting to recover my ability to walk, drive and relearn basic living skills. I take immense comfort in God's promise in these 2 verses where he tells us in clarity to put our trust and faith in Him! He will deliver us to where we need to be.

A. Jeremiah 29:11-14

11 For I know the plans I have for you," declares the Lord, "plans to prosper you and not to harm you, plans to give you hope and a future. 12 Then you will call on me and come and pray to me, and I will listen to you. 13 You will seek me and find me when you seek me with all your heart. 14 I will be found by you," declares the Lord, "and will bring you back from captivity.[a] I will gather you from all the nations and places where I have banished you," declares the Lord, "and will bring you back to the place from which I carried you into exile."

B. Also in 2 Corinthians 13:9

C.

D. 9 We are glad whenever we are weak but you are strong; and our prayer is that you may be fully restored.

My comfort is found in knowing I was not exiled, but rather delivered through prayer and worship. For these reasons I do not fear my health or my future. I know that my story is written and God will guide me in the right direction and to make good decisions. In fact at one point while I was in Baylor I clearly remember meeting God face to face in heaven. He told me I didn't yet belong there, which filled my soul with hope! But that I needed to return to earth as I had work to do for Him still! I recall the feeling of peace that rippled through me and the excitement of being told I had relevance and duty. When I reflect on the last 7 years, I praise the Lord for the opportunity to experience what I have gone through. I do pray that my family and friends can experience this same resolution. I know it has been hard for them having to be told to say their final goodbyes in a hospital conference room as I was given little hope of recovery, 5% to be exact. 5% probability of ever leaving the hospital bed or walking, standing, etc. What my doctors didn't factor in is I had the greatest doctor ever overseeing my care, and the love of those close to me praying constantly. My faith in Jesus to keep me around was strong, although exile can take many forms. My friends and colleagues from that time have turned their backs on me, yet as God has promised he never has and never will. I pray daily that God will restore what was, but I accept that this is His will.

I have been privileged to be a benefactor of many miracles. Not least of which is being here with you all today. God has led me to intersect with so many of His angels, from first responders to my amazing family to health care workers to PT and OT therapists. I have walked, do walk, have driven, though I really shouldn't do that anymore. My memory still functions as it did before, truly a miracle! In fact if anyone wants to play name that one hit wonder from the 60s, 70 or 80s, I'm up for that! I have walked my daughter Brittany up the aisle less than a year after the stroke,

My most amazing miracle I was witness to came in the Cleveland clinic where I went through a battery of tests, MRIs, cat scans to meet with a neurologist a few years post. I stunned him by walking into his office. He tapped the folder with my results and told me

usually when I see a patient with these results it's normally too late. He concurred yes I had had a stroke and my brain was oxygen deprived due to the blood clot. He showed me a solid example of gods love and true miracle by pointing out a new blood vessel in my brain that was ensuring blood flow to both hemispheres.he told me this was quite rare and uncommon and I was truly blessed.

I find comfort in multiple locations,the promises from god in scripture,bad dad jokes,but really are there any good ones? As a dad I specialize in these,I also am comforted by the hugs and smiles of my three granddaughters,and by the wonders of gods creation in nature...a beach at sunset,a building thunderstorm,summer fireflies,music and knowing I have a second chance to spend time with those important to me!I rejoice in the lord and all of his wonders each day.just in the act of waking up I find confidence that god is with me and in control

If I may I would like to share a prayer with you know.

Father god we praise tou today and every day as you listen and respond to our petitions! We pray to you that your grace will reign down upon us and guide us in our walk with you and clear the parkway to compassion and understanding of the paths others take,and pray that we become beacons for others to follow and find you.we also thank your son,Jesus Christ for his life and lessons.we are grateful that he showed us how suffering with grace and dignity will lead us to salvation.

So how can we show our support for those disabled or recovering from a traumatic brain injury? Understand they are fulfilling gods written destiny. Also be quick not to prejudge abilities or usefulness. There are no harder workers than those overcoming unexpected challenges.our ability to adapt and contribute unique points of view from our experiences and walks with god are unique and deserve to be respected.I'm still stunned by attitudes I've been exposed to simply by god asking me to be a beacon,an example for others.in the words of Bruce Springsteen no retreat no surrender.invite those challenged into your world,you'll be pleasantly surprised and please our lord.think through what if this happened to me or a loved one?be the change and listen to lords voice.ge guides us all faithfully.trust his plan for each of you. Trust in him to not exile you but to prosper tou and walk you to your destination.

I LEAVE YOU WITH A FEW QUESTIONS TO PONDER. FIRST OF ALL, DO YOU RECOGNIZE THE WORK OF GOD IN YOUR LIFE, ARE YOU WITH HIS GUIDANCE AND THE STORY HE HAS WRITTEN FOR YOU. DO YOU TRUST HIM TO ENSURE HE WILL GUIDE YOU TO WHERE YOU SHOULD BE. DO YOU SEE AN INDIVIDUAL LIKE ME AND ASSUME I'M NOT QUALIFIED TO TAKE ON TASKS, EVEN KNOWING THAT GOD IS IN CONTROL OF MY LIFE, AND I MAY BE A TEST FOR YOURS! REMEMBER A STROKE, TBI OR CTEP IS NOT AN EXILE, AND WE DO NOT WALK ALONE. IN YOUR LIFE YOU WILL LIKELY KNOW OF OTHERS GOD HAS WRITTEN UNIQUE STORIES FOR. ACCEPT THEM AS GOD DOES.

IT BECOMES A MATTER OF HOW WE VIEW SUCH INDIVIDUALS AND STRIVING TO SEE THEM AS GOD DOES. THE FOLLOWING PASSAGES SPEAK TO HOW GOD SEES US.

2. HEBREWS 2:9-11

3.

4. BUT WE SEE HIM WHO FOR A LITTLE WHILE WAS MADE LOWER THAN THE ANGELS, NAMELY JESUS, CROWNED WITH GLORY AND HONOR BECAUSE OF THE SUFFERING OF DEATH, SO THAT BY THE GRACE OF GOD HE MIGHT TASTE DEATH FOR EVERYONE.

5.

6. FOR IT WAS FITTING THAT HE, FOR WHOM AND BY WHOM ALL THINGS EXIST, IN BRINGING MANY SONS TO GLORY, SHOULD MAKE THE FOUNDER OF THEIR SALVATION PERFECT THROUGH

SUFFERING. FOR HE WHO SANCTIFIES AND THOSE WHO ARE SANCTIFIED ALL HAVE ONE SOURCE. THAT IS WHY HE IS NOT ASHAMED TO CALL THEM BROTHERS...

7. HEBREWS 2:10

8.

9. 10 IN BRINGING MANY SONS AND DAUGHTERS TO GLORY, IT WAS FITTING THAT GOD, FOR WHOM AND THROUGH WHOM EVERYTHING EXISTS, SHOULD MAKE THE PIONEER OF THEIR SALVATION PERFECT THROUGH WHAT HE SUFFERED.

THERE IS COMFORT IN GDS ASSURANCES THAT WE ARE NEVER EXILE FORGO OR ON OUR OWN! JESUSS PATH AND LIFE ARE A BEACON TO ALL WHO SEEK HOPE.I TOOK COMFORT IN LAST WEE SPEECH FROM AMANDA RUUD.WHO EXPLORE THE STO OF JOB AS A TALE OF HOPE. THAT SOMETIME THINGS THAT APPEAR BAD ARE MORE PO THAN APPEARS AT FIRST GL.TH YOU AMANDA FOR YOU HOPEFUL INTERP OF A BAD SITU! HER TALK IS POSTED ON THE VALPO CHAP YOU PMAKES A COMPANION PIECE TO MY TALK THIS MORNING.

MAY YOU WALK IN PEACE WITH THE LO AND LIVE YOUR STO IN PEACE WITH GOD!RUUD

