

SERMON – Tested Faith

Diya: When we were brainstorming about this week's sermon we thought about how Covid has affected each of us throughout the past year. Covid has affected each one of us: whether it was from not seeing friends or family, not going to work or school, or missing out on other things.

Brian: I think everyone's faith was tested this year. Personally, I was tested by having to persevere through any situation, no matter how difficult. For example, during this semester, I had to balance 4 college classes, 1 AP class, a sport and work. During quarantine, my time management skills improved a lot. But I still wasn't staying on task with my crazy schedule! So I made sure that before each week started, I created an agenda of what I planned to do and crossed out each task or assignment once it was done. When one task became too difficult for me, I looked to God and He gave me the strength to complete it.

Diya: Last year, for example, I applied to be a part of a program at the Baltimore National Aquarium called the Youth Exhibit Guide. I was accepted to the program. I was extremely excited about the opportunity to learn more about marine life and get to meet other people with my same interests. However, due to Covid, they cancelled the program and moved it online. I was disappointed. I was worried that the online version would be less engaging and that I wouldn't learn much from it. But I also knew that being online would be safer for everyone and I was still extremely grateful to have this opportunity. Even though the future was uncertain, I still knew that it was important to remain hopeful and trust that everything would work out.

Diya: On the day of my first meeting I was nervous but also excited for what was to come. To start, everyone went around and said their names, favorite animals, and what grades they were in. My favorite animal is the Orca, so I was surprised to see that a few other people there also said their favorite animal was the Orca. It was nice knowing that other people there shared my same interests and passions. Another part of the program that I was going to be missing out on was not being able to see any of the animals. Even though I didn't get to see them in person or interact with them, one of the program leaders showed us the green sea turtle named Kai over zoom. Sea turtles are also one of my favorite animals, so I was thrilled to be able to see one, even if I wasn't there in person.

MOTIVATION

Diya: Throughout this experience I have learned that just because something has changed it doesn't necessarily mean it is going to be bad. Even though there were significant changes made to the program I still had a lot of fun participating and learned important life lessons that will be useful in the future.

Brian: Honestly, what has motivated me to work hard and face these challenges this year is thinking about the future and how everything I am doing now will help benefit me in the end.

Diya: My own faith has definitely been tested this year, especially because of all the uncertainty and lack of control during COVID.

Brian: When I am dealing with a difficult situation, I turn to my friends. They have helped me and supported me throughout the pandemic, and I hope that I have done the same for them. In the coming months I am looking forward to going back to a sense of normalcy. I am looking forward to being back in person for my final year of high school. I believe my faith has grown stronger over this past year because I don't know how I would have survived without God.

Diya: Having faith in God and having friends and family to support you is a way many of us can deal with any stressful situations we may come across. Also now that the cases are dropping, we are going to be able to go back to the aquarium in person this summer which I am very excited for.

Brian: Faith is important to me because it gives me something to believe in when my spirits are low. Whenever I'm dealing with a challenge, I feel God is there with me. He helps guide me through and He encourages me to continue, persevering through it. Isaiah 41:10 states "So do not fear, for I am with you; do not be dismayed, for I am your God. I will strengthen you and help you. I will uphold you with my righteous right hand." My aunt gave me a card with this scripture, and whenever I am dealing with a problem, I just read the scripture. It gives me the strength that is necessary to get through the problem I have at hand.

May God Bless you!