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[The Seven Arrows of Our Christian Economy — Arrow #2](#)

Introduction

I want to welcome you this morning to OIC and tell you how glad I am to see your smiling faces. Today we will continue our series, The Seven Arrows of our Christian Economy. Last week, if you weren't with us, our first arrow was the necessity and value of prayer. For those who weren't here last week I want to just bring you up to speed. And tell you my personal goal for the church. My personal goal for our church is to help create an atmosphere where people know they are loved and where people can experience the love of God. We have to not just be AT church, we need to BE church.

Last week we visualized a church that is a healthy church, where everyone participates, where people are welcomed and incorporated into the body, a place where God is honored all the time. Visualize also that all the seats are filled because people want to come here. So I believe God has given us a firm foundation for all this to happen. For one thing, I'll do everything I can to ensure the fact that this church will be Christ centered and Bible based. By utilizing the 7 arrows I hope to show us what it will take to have a church that we have just visualized in our minds. Why arrows? It is scriptural.

He has made My mouth like a sharp sword,
In the shadow of His hand He has concealed Me;
And He has also made Me a select arrow,
He has hidden Me in His quiver.
He said to Me, "You are My Servant, Israel,
In Whom I will show My glory." Isaiah 49:2,3

. The word Israel here means Jesus and I want the arrows in the quiver to represent 7 aspects of a church of how God desires it to be. This passage is prophetic and the arrows in the quiver that are spoken of here are what Jesus will pronounce as His doctrines for a church that honors God.

Arrow #2 We should be a church where we receive encouragement

Most often we need encouragement for one reason. Because we are struggling with discouragement. Discouragement is a thief. It steals your vitality, joy, and peace. Some of you cried this morning before you came here. God knows that. Discouragement is dissatisfaction with the past, distaste for the present and distrust of the future. It displays an unawareness of God and unbelief in His promises. When we have nothing else to rely on, we look only at our circumstances. See, not long after discouragement comes upon us, he brings his friends along and they move in with him. You probably know his friends pretty well.. their names are fatigue, depression, doubt and bitterness. When discouragement takes hold, we need encouragement. Our support text today is II Corinthians 1:3-5.

Blessed be the God and Father of our Lord Jesus Christ, the Father of mercies and God of all comfort, who comforts us in all our affliction so that we will be able to comfort those who are in any affliction with the comfort with which we ourselves are comforted by God. For just as the sufferings

of Christ are ours in abundance, so also our comfort is abundant through Christ. II Corinthians 1:3-5

I found 3 ways that we can be encouraged within these verses.

#1 I am encouraged to know that God is a God of mercy and comfort.

Blessed be the God and Father of our Lord Jesus Christ, the Father of mercies and God of all comfort. II Corinthians 1:3

But how is that comfort received? Of Course when Jesus ascended, he sent the Holy Spirit to be our Comforter.

But the Comforter, who is the Holy Spirit, whom the Father will send in my name, he shall teach you all things, and bring all things to your remembrance, whatsoever I have said unto you. John 14:26

Another way I receive comfort is by reading God's Word.

⁴For whatever was written in earlier times was written for our instruction, so that through perseverance and the encouragement of the Scriptures we might have hope. Romans 15:4

Every time I read verses like this it serves as a reminder to me that God wants to be a God of encouragement for us. God's Word has many promises for us. For example, Isaiah 54:17

"No weapon that is formed against you will prosper;
And every tongue that accuses you in judgment you will condemn.
This is the heritage of the servants of the LORD,
And their vindication is from Me," declares the LORD. Isaiah 54:17

I find encouragement that no weapon formed against me shall prosper and that God's promise to me is that he is a God of protection. Sometimes in our lives we find that we have enemies who are trying to discourage us by tearing us down.

#2 I find encouragement in knowing that God is aware of my afflictions and troubles.

who comforts us in all our affliction so that we will be able to comfort those who are in any affliction with the comfort with which we ourselves are comforted by God. II Corinthians 1:4a

God knows every aspect of our lives.

The LORD will guard your going out and your coming in
From this time forth and forever. Psalm 121:8

Let me illustrate that by telling you a story about a mother. It seems appropriate to talk about this on mother's Day. But it's about a mother that asked her teenage son to vacuum the floors and to clean out the birdcage. Somewhat begrudgingly the son agreed. As he was vacuuming and looked up at the birdcage he noticed the family pet bird, Chippy and he thought to himself, why can't I do 2 jobs at once? Maybe I can vacuum out the bottom of the birdcage. That would make life easier. Well, you can guess what happened. While vacuuming the cage, the phone rang and he left the hose of the vacuum in the birdcage. When he came back, he couldn't find Chippy. And then he discovered Chippy in the vacuum itself. He rescued Chippy and dusted him off, cleaned him under the faucet, put the hair dryer on him and brought Chippy through the agonizing ordeal. Sometimes in our lives, we feel a lot like Chippy the bird. We have agonizing ordeals that take away our encouragement.

God sees our comings and our goings. God watched you come to church this morning. Many times over the course of the life of Paul, he was in desperate need of comfort and encouragement as well. In II Corinthians 11:27

²⁷ I have been in labor and hardship, through many sleepless nights, in hunger and thirst, often without food, in cold and exposure. II Corinthians 11:27

Paul reminds us that even he lived with pain and sleepless nights. So often is the case with our lives in time of pain and discouragement that we think we're the only ones but here even the apostle Paul lived through those circumstances.

I love what it says in Matthew 10:29-31.

²⁹ Are not two sparrows sold for a ¹cent? And yet not one of them will fall to the ground apart from your Father. ³⁰ But the very hairs of your head are all numbered. ³¹ So do not fear; you are more valuable than many sparrows. Matthew 10:29-31

When God compares us to sparrows he considers us so much more important and cares that much more for us. God cares about us. Ephesians 2:10 even tells us that we are His masterpiece.

#3 I am encouraged to know that a healthy church is one where we are expected to comfort one another

⁴ so that we will be able to comfort those who are in any affliction with the comfort with which we ourselves are comforted by God. ⁵ For just as the sufferings of Christ are ours in abundance, so also our comfort is abundant through Christ II Corinthians 1:4b,5

. Yes, God is the God of all comfort but all comfort does not necessarily come vertically. Some of that comfort comes horizontally. Bringing comfort to others is a daunting task.

²⁵ not forsaking our own assembling together, as is the habit of some, but encouraging one another; and all the more as you see the day drawing near. Hebrews 10:25

This reminds us that one of the reasons we come together and fellowship is to encourage one another to love and good deeds. Sometimes we need to have a "go to" person who will encourage us. If you don't have that person in your life, let me be that person for you.

Sometimes people have brought trouble on themselves but we don't love them any less. Isn't it a great idea to know that our comfort can overflow into the lives of others. But we can't give what we don't have. We need people in our lives who are cheering us on. I think that's what church is all about.

. God may be sending someone to encourage you right now. Don't you just hate it when someone won't receive your encouragement? I don't know why people would rather wallow in discouragement. We know someone is hurting and we approach them to bring comfort but they refuse to receive it. I find in many churches people come every Sunday yet don't really know the people sitting next to them very well. There is a big difference between being marbles in a dark bag and being like a cluster of grapes on a vine. Sometimes we can attend church week after week and no one seems to take notice of us. Can I illustrate that by telling you a story about a college student who was studying ornithology. There was this college student who was studying ornithology, the science of birds. It came to the final exam and he studied like crazy. He learned everything about birds. He learned the different colors, the different kinds of nests, migration patterns, the different colors of eggs. He learned it all. He was ready. He walked into the exam room and to his surprise

there were 20 large posters on the walls and all the posters showed were pictures of birds' feet. And the exam was to give the name of the bird that belonged to the feet. Well the student was irate. Why had he studied all that information only to discover that the exam was ridiculous? As the professor stood in the middle of the room the student went to him and said "I'm not taking this exam. It's insane". And the professor said "If you don't take this exam, you're going to fail". He said "Well, I'm not taking the exam". And as he proceeded to walk out the door the professor said "What's your name anyway?". He said "I've been to every class you've taught this year and you don't know my name?" "No I don't." So the student said, "Let me take off my shoes and socks."

Conclusion

You don't have to live in a world of hurt and doubt. You don't have to cry alone. There is encouragement for you in the deepest darkest parts of your life. Yes, God is the God of mercy and comfort and yes, we do find comfort in God's Word and in our faith to receive the promises there. But also, we as a church, need to be actively involved in the giving of encouragement to those with whom we walk and worship together. I think we should see a lot more group hugs at church. As I see it, we should not only be encouraged, but we must absolutely be encouragers. Let's pray.