



NELSON'S NOTES

August 13, 2017

First United Methodist Church
Saint Petersburg, Florida

Flying to Dallas this week I had the serendipitous delight of meeting a friend from our church in line. We got to sit together during the flight, making a two-and-a-half- hour flight seem like a half-hour flight. We got to talk about all kinds of things, including experiencing turbulence in airplanes. This came up, as you might imagine, because we had a little bump in the air – a bump that conjured up a news item from last week about an American Airlines flight having such a violent jolt that coffee stained the ceiling of the plane; videos showed debris everywhere, and one passenger acknowledged that he said to himself, “This is what it’s like when a plane goes down.” Parenthetically, I remember being hit by a car while riding (not driving) a snowmobile. As I went flying, I thought to myself, “So this is what it’s like to die.” Fortunately, both that passenger on the news and I are here to tell the stories! Having seen the news report, I was on one hand more sensitive to the jolt but on the other, more confident than ever in the capability of the plane to handle such turbulence. You see, in that news report they showed the testing at Boeing for the amount of sway a wing can

handle. The angle they raised the wing to, and the warping it withstood, made the wings look like they were wrapping around the fuselage. It was crazy. And comforting! The only detail missing here is that, to survive the violent turbulence that can be out there, you have to be strapped in. The only people hurt were the ones without their seatbelts on. Kind of makes going to the bathroom exciting, doesn’t it?! This point, of course, turned to a spiritual application. Life seems like it should be bump-less, just like the air that we see in the sky. It really seems weird that you could be flying in clear skies and then suddenly have the bottom fall out from you. It just doesn’t seem right, not unlike the surprises in life that can come our way from time to time. So, in the journey of life, choosing, not the carrier, but the manufacturer, seems prudent. Who you trust your life with seems like an important decision to make. In this case, the plane is our faith, specifically Christianity. When we place our faith in Jesus Christ, we walk into a place of safety, a means to the end of our journey, an adventure that enhances and even transcends life.

But it doesn’t much help if you’re not strapped in. The image of the seatbelt I would call the relationship that we have with Jesus. Prayer, worship, study, keep us anchored in the faith, allowing us to benefit from the protection that the faith offers. I think we can sit in church this way – we are in the plane, but when turbulence comes we bounce all around because we are not secured by the relationship. We’re not clicked in by the prayer; we’re just sitting on the belt rather than wearing it. Oh, and sometimes we feel the turbulence and blame the carrier. We think that American Airlines is the one responsible for the turbulence OR for the capabilities of the manufacturer for that matter and go to another “carrier” when the going gets a little rough. The carrier doesn’t matter. The manufacturer, and the seatbelt, do. So, please buckle up in this United Methodist airline. We’re off to a great adventure, with the eternal security (I don’t mean this in the ivory tower sense of the word) of a relationship with Christ, ready to fly the friendly, and sometimes turbulent, skies. Ready to fly,

Craig
’Tis grace that brought me safe thus