

Let us pray: O Lord our God, thank you for this day. Thank you for giving us ears to hear, voices to sing, and hearts to love. We pray that you would speak to us today, and breathe new life into us. May we be transformed by your Word this morning. Amen.

I want to talk to you a little bit this morning about a few things: speed, light, and God. Light comes up a lot in the bible, it's a common image in the psalms, and we also heard the story of Saul's conversion on the road to Damascus, when he was blinded by a bright light. In that story, Jesus is the light ... And following him is exactly what Saul did from that moment on. Jesus transformed his life instantly, all in a flash, with literally blinding speed.

But first, a little bit of discussion about the different speed of things. First off, does anyone know the name of the fastest person in the world? Usain bolt! When he set the world record at the 2009 Berlin World Championships, the data showed that he reached a top speed of 44.16 km/h. That's pretty fast.

But sometimes, I personally go even faster: when I'm on my car on the highway, I go 100 km/h, more than twice as fast as Usain bolt. And how many of you have been on a plane? Some planes go up to 1000 km/h, ten times faster than my car!

There's something even faster, though, a world record for the fastest a person has ever gone: Upon re-entry to the Earth's atmosphere on May 26, 1969, the Apollo 10 Lunar Module reached speeds of 24,791 miles per hour. That's almost 40,000 km/h or 11 km every second. If you could go that fast, you could go from here to Cornerbrook, on the other side of Newfoundland, in just one minute. Those astronauts were surely the fastest people.

Even faster than that, though, is light. A lot faster. Light goes 299,792 kilometers every SECOND, fast enough to go all the way around the earth seven and a half times in one second.

As you're thinking about that speed, remember, Jesus is the light. So how fast do you think God can get to you when you really need him? Really, really fast.

Many of you will know the story of Jonah. God tells him to go to the city of Ninevah and tell them the truth about God, but he tries to run away instead. God sends a fish to swallow him and take him there anyways, and it finally spits him back out after three days. We heard today what happens next: He grumpily goes to Ninevah, and preaches what one minister I know described as "the worst sermon ever". "In forty days, your city will be overthrown. You are all doomed." What a downer. But by the grace of God, the light shone through to the people of Ninevah and they immediately changed their ways. It was the worst sermon ever, with the best response ever. The people were in darkness, but Jesus is the light, and they were saved faster than anyone would have thought possible.

Our story from the book of Mark today is one of my favorites: the story of a woman who had been suffering for years. She had spent all her money and all of her hope on doctors who could do nothing for her. She had spent years trying to get better, probably taking medicines and waiting to see if they helped, hiring new doctors and waiting to see if *they* could help, and always being disappointed in the end. But finally, she heard that Jesus was in town, so she left her house to try to get to him. She pushed through the crowd, and touched the edge of his cloak, and immediately, she was healed by the power that came out from Jesus at the speed of light.

These are stories of grace, stories from the bible that teach all of us something about who God is. They are stories of real suffering and evil, of incurable illnesses and whole cities rotten to the core. Our lives can be full of bad things, too: all of us have experienced suffering of our own: maybe someone we love has died or moved away, maybe we feel like we have no friends, maybe we or someone we know is sick. But the love of God can come to us immediately, and in ways that we would never expect.

It was so much fun to get to be a part of the VBS program this week, to lead the bible exploration station and work with all the volunteers to teach thirty kids that “Jesus is the light”. But if you’d asked any of us just a week and a half ago how many kids we were going to have, the most honest answer would have been: “Well, since Diana’s leading it, we do know that Cameron, Marcel, and Grant will be there!” It took a lot of faith to do prep work, and it took a lot of faith from our congregations to volunteer and be supportive of all of this, when we really had no idea if it would take off or flop. I hope that as you look at the slideshow of all the smiling faces we had, and as we have a chance at coffee hour to meet some of the families who came here today because of the great time their kids had at Camp Out VBS, you will reflect on how we can bear witness to God’s love and faithfulness, and the joy we have received as a reward for our trust.

So may God bless you today. If you need healing today, or if you need to feel joy, if you need to be loved or to love, may the light come to you and transform your life faster than you ever thought possible. May we live as people of the light, shining with love, peace and joy. May we never forget that Jesus is the light.