

GraceNotes

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Grace Christian Church
1713 E. Sevier Avenue
Kingsport, TN 37664
(423) 247-2691

Dr. J. Edward Clevinger, Minister



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www.gracechristiankingsport.com

GROWING IN GRACE “Columbus-Style Perseverance”

“Brave Admiral say but one good word;
What shall we do when hope is gone?
The words leapt like a leaping sword;
‘Sail on! Sail on! Sail on and on!’”

So writes Cincinnatus Miller in his 1908 poem, “Columbus.” It was a tribute to Christopher Columbus’ 1492 voyage to the Americas. Columbus’ intent was to prove a westward course to the Far East was feasible. As it turned out, he landed at San Salvador, an island in what is now the Bahamas. The Far East was still far away. The world was much bigger than Columbus estimated. Nevertheless his discovery was of paramount importance, not only because a new world was discovered, but because of the determination and perseverance behind his discovery. That’s the focus of Miller’s tribute in his poem.

Indeed Columbus had to resist the despair and despondency of his crew to continue the journey. His insistence to “Sail on!” finally encountered the threat of mutiny on October 10th, two days before landing. Columbus promised that if land was not sighted in 2 – 3 days, they would turn around. He then prayed for God’s intervention. On October 12, 1492, land was sighted in the Atlantic moonlight. As the sun rose, the voyagers rowed to shore. Columbus knelt down, kissed the sand, offered prayers to God, and said, “This is San Salvador,” meaning “Holy Savior.”

To be sure Columbus’ reckoning, planning, making and completing of the ocean transit was divine providence. In fact Columbus attributed his very conviction about the undertaking from start to finish to the inspiration of the Holy Spirit. His journal entries bear witness:

“With a hand that could be felt, the Lord opened my mind to the fact that it would be possible to sail from here to the Indies....There was a fire that burned within me. This fire was not merely mine but also the Holy Spirit urging me to press forward – (ie., to “Sail On!”)”

The motivation of Christopher Columbus clearly found its ignition source and its sustaining strength in his Christian faith. The ‘woke world’ of the 2020’s has tragically spared no opportunity to vilify Columbus as an envoy of European colonial corruption. He has been accused of white

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