Lessons From the Titanic...........John 4:1-14

The great ship sailed majestically through the cold, clear, moonless night. She was the pinnacle of the shipbuilder's art. The finest engineers and the most competent shipwrights had been employed in her construction. No expense was spared. The Harland and Wolff Shipbuilding Company in Belfast, Ireland spent appo. 3 years and 7.5 million to build her in 1912. It is estimated that it would cost 400 million to build her today.

She was launched on May 31, 1911. The ways were lubricated with 3 tons of soft soap, 15 tons of tallow and 5 tons of tallow mixed with train oil. At 12:15:02 the proud hull was afloat.

The Titanic was 882.5 feet (294 yards) long and 92.5 feet (31 yards) wide, 11 stories high and 4 city blocks long. Her displacement weight was 66,000 tons. Her 3 bronze propellers were connected to two massive steam engines which stood more than 30 feet tall. Deep in the hold were 29 large steam boilers containing 159 furnaces. The ship's furnaces consumed 660 tons of coal each day. The engines generated 55,000 horsepower which drove the ship at appo. 26 miles per hour. The two outer propellers were 16'5" in height. The inner propeller was 23'5" in height. They were connected to the engines by huge steel driveshafts which were approximately 12" in diameter.

The ship was designed with a series of 15 internal bulkheads which contained watertight doors to divide the hull into 16 watertight compartments. The engineers thought this made the ship virtually unsinkable. The ship could float with any 4 of her compartments flooded. The engineers did not foresee any disaster which would cause more than 2 of the compartments to flood.

"Massive" was a proper adjective to describe the ship. She was the largest ship that had been built to that time.

The Titanic's central anchor required a team of 20 horses to haul it to the shipyard. The two side anchors each weighed half as much as the central one. They were raised and lowered by 96 tons of cable.

The ship's four giant funnels towered 175 feet above the kneel plate.
The ship's parlors and public rooms were magnificent. No expense was spared to furnish them with rich paneling, carpeting, beautiful polished woods and giant chandeliers. The grand staircase led from "D" deck up to the promenade deck. It was one of the most stunning features on board.

It was lit by natural light through a wrought iron and glass dome during the day and by gold-plated crystal lights at night.

The Titanic was designed to be the most luxurious liner afloat. Close attention was paid to every single detail from the design of the large public rooms and open decks to the individual light fixtures and faucets in the cabins. Everything was purchased brand new or specially made for the ship; and everything was designed to make the passengers comfortable and to entertain them during the voyage.

A vast army of crewmembers kept the ship operating and the passengers content. There were chefs, bakers, butchers, kitchen workers, mailroom staff, barbers, engineers, fireman, stokers and luggage loaders— 899 crewmembers in all.

Captain Edward Smith was a very professional, experienced master of the White Star's ships. The maiden voyage of the Titanic was to be the capstone of his professional career. He was planning to pilot the ship to New York and back for her maiden voyage and then to retire.

He was assisted by 8 senior crewmen from Chief Officer Henry Wilde to 5th Officer Harold Lowe. There were 18 stewardesses to help with the care of the passengers. Two barbershops offered men a daily hot lather and shave along with a haircut if necessary. Three elevators took first class passengers from the promenade deck down 5 decks to their cabins. The elevators were magnificently decorated and disguised behind classical pillars.

The ship left Southampton, England on April 10, 1912 with a passenger roster of around 2200 persons. Because of the luxurious furnishings of the new ship, many rich, powerful and famous people were on board. It is estimated that the combined worth of the passengers was appo. two hundred fifty million dollars.

On the night of April 14th the Titanic was steaming at close to full speed through the cold waters south of Newfoundland. The ship had been warned of icebergs. The captain posted extra lookouts but did not reduce the speed. There is some dispute among historians. Most feel it is likely that the White Star's Chief Executive Bruce Ismay encouraged Captain Smith to set a new speed record for an
Atlantic crossing. High in the crow's nest lookout Frederick Fleet, one of 6 lookouts, scanned the dark ocean. The time was appo. 11:40 pm when Fleet saw something directly ahead. Quickly Fleet banged the crow's nest bell three times, warning of danger ahead. Then he lifted the phone to call the bridge. A calm voice asked, "What did you see?"

"Iceberg right ahead," replied Fleet.

"Thank you," acknowledged the voice from the bridge.

For the next 37 seconds Fleet and another lookout stood quietly side by side watching the ice draw nearer. They were almost on top of it. Both men braced themselves for the crash. Then miraculously the ship began to turn to the port side. At the last moment the stern shot clear and the ice glided swiftly by along the starboard side. It looked to Fleet like it had been a very close shave.

Unfortunately for the 2200 people on board it was not a close shave but a mortal wound. As the ship swung by the iceberg it tore appo. 6 narrow vertical slits in the hull for over 200 feet. Instantly water began pouring into 5 of the ship's compartments. Watertight doors were lowered. Pumps were started, but in appo. 2 ½ hours the pride of the White Star Line stood on end, broke in half, and sank to the ocean bottom appo. 2 1/2 miles below. Appo. 1500 people lost their lives that cold April night. The death toll would have been much higher if the ship would have been fully loaded. It was only carrying appo. ¾ it's full number of passengers.

On the night of August 31, 1985, 73 years later, the ship was rediscovered by scientists using an underwater submersible equipped with cameras and sonar. To date, pieces of the wreck have been brought to the surface, but all attempts to raise the Titanic have failed. The lure of the Titanic lives on as countless films, books, musicals, songs, computer games and websites continue to inform us about the great ship.

Today you and I can learn some lessons from this great seafaring disaster. Think with me briefly about 5 lessons:

1st, there was an overconfidence in technology.
2nd, Power/wealth meant nothing when they were faced with death.
3rd, the failure of the lifeboat crews to help those in the water
4th, the failure to prepare for disaster.
5th, the failure to heed the warnings of icy conditions

Looking first at

I. An Overconfidence in Technology

The Titanic was built in the heady days of intense competition for the steamship passenger's business. In order to remain competitive, the latest technology was employed. As we will see later, safety was sacrificed for speed and luxury. The very latest construction methods and materials were used. The system of watertight doors and compartments was thought to have made the ship virtually unsinkable. There is a story of one of the officers telling a passenger, "Lady, even God himself can't sink this ship." There is debate among historians as to whether that statement was actually made, but the fact remains that the builders, owners and crew felt that the ship was "virtually unsinkable". There was a complete reliance on man's ability and technology in place of a reliance on God's protection and care. The ease with which the ice inflicted a mortal wound on the great ship is a lesson to us that no matter how far we advance technologically, God is in control of every detail of our lives. Without his power and protection we are totally helpless.

We can go to the moon, produce genetically engineered food, perform near-miraculous life-saving surgeries and communicate with anyplace on the globe, but God with His little finger can undo all our technology in seconds if he chooses.

David Wilkerson writes:

Quote,

We live in an age in which technology was supposed to provide everything. It would give us all we needed without leaving the house. Now, we are overwhelmed with choices.
When I was a teenager, there were three car companies. Now the choices are unlimited. Then we were blown away by the invention of the transistor radio. Today, kids are swamped with choices of 25-30 movie screens, most showing filth that we could not have imagined just 20 years ago.

We have been inundated with things, enticed by newly invented venues of sensuality, promised a longer life span—but we are unable to enjoy it.

Now we face a generation harboring a sense of deprivation. Even our smartest young men and women—Wall Street brokers making hundreds of thousands of dollars per year—feel deprived. They're plagued with the feeling that something is missing, something is being denied them.

It is a spiritual vacuum. It is the syndrome of the empty soul. You see, it doesn't take long to learn that material things are soul-numbing. That is why we see such urgency in the secular world. Everybody is racing to reach an unkown goal, an illusive place of peace and fulfillment. One high-flying entrepreneur said, "Everything new is a pale shadow of what lies ahead. The pace is about to go into hyperactive." Another suggests, "We are becoming a metastasizing organism beyond reach of any guiding principle."

End of quotation

We must never forget that it is God who designed and made us. It is God who placed within each of us a great God-shaped vacuum which will never be satisfied until we accept his Son as our Savior and yield the guidance of our lives to Him.

Technology is wonderful. We should use those parts of it which are legal and moral, but we must never forget that we belong to God. He made us. He longs to fellowship with us and none of us can live without His constant care and concern. God is the ultimate source of our technology. It is he alone who empowers man to do the things he does. Never, never grow overconfident in technology to the point of believing you don't really need God.

Three million plus rivets held the steel plates of the Titanic together. But when God spoke, the great ship was doomed. Today, there is only one source of
salvation. It is through the Lord Jesus Christ. Technology will mean nothing if we come to the end of life without having made provision for our soul's eternal home.

Think with me now about the lesson that when the Titanic sank,

II. Power, Wealth Meant Nothing.

The Titanic was making its maiden voyage with many of the richest, most famous and powerful people from Europe and America. We already mentioned that the aggregate wealth of the passengers was appo. 250 million dollars. There were the Astors, the Wideners and the Thayers.
...the artist Frank Millet,
...the editor W.T. Stead,
...the writer Jacques Futrelle,
...the theatrical producer Henry B. Harris,
...President Taft's military aide Archie Butt,
...the philanthropist Isidor Straus.

There were 31 personal maids and valets. The rich and powerful did not travel light!
Mrs. Charlotte Cardeza of Philadelphia took along 14 trunks, 4 suitcases, 3 crates and a medicine chest. They contained, among other things,
70 dresses,
10 fur coats,
38 large feather pieces,
22 hatpins,
91 pairs of gloves,
and a music box in the shape of a bird.
Billy Carter, also from Philadelphia, lost his red 35 hp Renault motorcar,
60 shirts,
15 pairs of shoes,
2 sets of tails, and
24 polo sticks.
The President's aide, Archie Butt, was traveling much lighter with only 7 trunks.

As preparations were being made to abandon ship,

Major Arthur Peuchen (poo-ken) looked at the tin box on the table...[in his cabin]. Inside were 200,000 dollars in bonds, 100,000 dollars in preferred stock. He thought a good deal about it as he took off his dinner jacket, put on two suits of long underwear and some heavy clothes.

Then he took a last look around the little cabin—the real brass bed...the green mesh net along the wall for valuables at night...the marble washstand...the wicker armchair...the horsehair sofa...the fan in the ceiling...the bells and electrical fixtures that on a liner always look as if they were installed as an afterthought.

Now his mind was made up. He slammed the door, leaving behind the tin box on the table. In another minute he was back. Quickly he picked up a good-luck pin and three oranges. As he left for the last time, the tin box was still on the table.

The major was saved because his help was needed in a lifeboat, but the tin box went down with the ship.

All over the ship that night the rich and powerful were simply left to stand and watch as the crew tried to load the women and children onto the lifeboats.

All the wealth and power in the world was useless as the men and women came face to face with a watery grave.

None of them could buy their way to safety. Many of the most powerful men and women in the world went to their deaths that night. This reminds us that we must never trust in wealth or power for our eternal salvation, but in Jesus Christ.

Most of us will never be very wealthy or powerful in this world's goods, but it is important that we understand that there is nothing other than faith in Jesus Christ which will save us. Eph. 2:8 says, "For by grace you have been saved through faith; and that not of yourselves, it is the gift of God..." (NASB)
Speaking of Jesus, Peter said to the rulers of the people and elders of Israel in Acts chapter 2, "Neither is there salvation in any other: for there is none other name under heaven given among men, whereby we must be saved."

When you and I face the grim hand of death only one thing will matter. Not our wealth, not our power, not our possessions— but our faith in Jesus Christ.

A third lesson I see in the Titanic tragedy is that most of the people in the boats showed

III. Unconcern for the Drowning People around Them.

There were a total of 20 boats sent from the deck of the Titanic. Many of the boats were not filled to capacity. They rowed away from the sinking ship in order to avoid being sucked into the water when the Titanic went down. After the Titanic sank the people in the boats heard the pitiful cries of the people in the water. Even though many of the boats had lots of extra room, only one boat made any effort to pick up swimmers. That boat only saved 4 people.

Walter Lord in the book The Night Lives On, has this to say about the inaction of the crew in the boats,

"The sorriest chapter of the night was the failure of the ship's half-empty lifeboats to heed the cries that rose from the sea. The only excuse is that sheer terror overwhelmed every other instinct."

"End of quotation"

What an incredible picture! How can we understand human beings with the power to help sinking swimmers turning their backs on them with no effort to save them? How can we begin to fathom the emotions of many of the women sitting helplessly in the lifeboats knowing that their husbands and sons were crying and drowning nearby and knowing that nothing would be done to save them?

But think with me about the world in which you and I live today. Thousands of lost souls are slipping over the brink into a Christless eternity every single day we live. We have the power to save them. We know the Savior who can give them

1The King James Version, (Cambridge: Cambridge) 1769.
eternal life. But sadly, many of us are sitting on our oars while those around us perish.

It is a sad commentary on us as conservative Brethren that most of us have no close friends who are unsaved. Most of us spend the majority of our time with fellow conservative Brethren.

The old sea salt made an astute observation when he said, "When I fish, I go where the fish are." You don't fish in the bathtub. You go where the fish are! If you and I ever hope to impact the pagan world with the gospel, we need to have contact with the unsaved in a meaningful way. We need to build bridges to them. For too long we have sat in the church building saying, "Let them come to us." Christ says, "Go ye into all the world and preach the gospel to every creature." It will never happen if we sit comfortably in church while they go to hell outside our doors.

I love the definition of a missionary which says, "A missionary is one who never gets used to the sound of lost people's footfalls going into eternity without Christ"! How the fate of lost souls slipping into eternity without Christ should move us.

Each of us should know a simple presentation of the gospel to use when the Spirit presents us the opportunity.

I like to think of 4 steps to salvation. It's not the only way, but it is a way. D.L. Moody was once criticized by a lady who didn't like his method of presenting the gospel.

Moody said, "Lady, I know my way of presenting the gospel is a poor one, but I like my way of doing it a lot better than your way of not doing it."

I like to remember a little jingle which will form an acrostic to help me remember the 4 steps of a gospel presentation.

The little jingle is "All People Just Must" (Say it with me). The first 4 letters of the words are A-P-J-M.

The A— means All have sinned.
The P— means There is a price on sin.
The J— means that Jesus paid that price.
The M— means that Every person must accept that salvation.
There is obviously a lot more to giving a presentation of the gospel, but the jingle "All People Just Must" will help you to remember the main points of your gospel presentation.

(Say it with me again).

"All people just must."

The joy of personally leading someone to salvation is unmatched by anything else in the world.

Let me challenge each of us to become familiar with a presentation of the gospel so that when the Spirit gives us an opportunity we can speak for Christ.

We should pray for a passion for lost souls. We should pray for God to show us people who are open to the gospel.

We should pray before we leave in the morning, "Lord, who can I share the gospel with? Please allow me to help some lost soul to find salvation through Christ today."

If we will be sensitive to God's Spirit, He will lead us to those who are ready to respond to the invitation of the gospel.

Our next lesson is that they

IV. Failed to Prepare for Disaster.

It seems incredible to us today, but the steamship line was not required to carry enough lifeboats to save all her passengers and crew. The board of trade regulations required the White Star Line to provide space for only 962 persons in its lifeboats. The White Star Line was generous and supplied space for an extra 216 passengers. In a "worst case" situation the Titanic could have legally gone to sea with lifeboats for only 27% of her passengers and crew.

The Titanic's crew could have saved 1178 persons if every boat would have been filled. Because of inefficiency of the crew and apathy of the passengers, only 705 people were saved.

This was not unique in the shipping industry of the day. Of 39 British liners registered at over 10,000 tons in 1912, 33 did not provide lifeboats for everybody, yet fully complied with the law.
The problem was, carrying enough boats for everyone meant there would be less room on the upper decks for the suites, the games and sports, the verandahs and palm courts, and the glass-enclosed observation lounges that lured the wealthy travelers from the competition. The feeling was that "boats for all" weren't really necessary, after all. The new super-ships could easily ride out the storms which used to swamp the boats of the past. The introduction of watertight compartments was believed to make the ships much safer. No one could imagine a disaster which would flood more than two compartments at once (The Titanic had 5 compartments damaged). The new wireless communication would allow a ship in trouble to quickly summon help. In short, the lifeboats would only be used to ferry passengers from one ship to another. Surely no one needed "boats for all" to do that! So the Titanic sailed with only 20 lifeboats, 4 of which were collapsibles which were not even fixed into davits to be launched, but were tied to the top of the officers' quarters, making them very difficult to launch.

One man who saw the danger was the managing director of the shipbuilders. He was uneasy about the small number of lifeboats planned for the Titanic. He asked to have the davits designed in such a way that they could hold up to 64 boats. But because of the extra expense involved, the White Star Line elected to go with only the required number of lifeboats. Because of this, over 1500 people lost their lives.

God's Word tells us that this old world will be destroyed by a Holy God who will judge and punish sin. Today mankind is gaily rushing down the broad way to destruction. No preparation is made for the security of their souls which will live forever in heaven or hell. Men and women today are much more interested in "the good life" than in making provision for the destiny of their eternal souls.

Like the final lesson from the Titanic, they simply

V. Ignore the Warnings all Around Them.

The Titanic was steaming very fast into waters where ice had been spotted. The ship had received 8 messages by wireless or blinker warning of the ice ahead. The day of the collision, 6 messages were received. Putting them together would have
shown a huge block of danger appo. 78 miles wide directly in the path of the speeding Titanic. Nobody on the ship's bridge put together the whole picture. There was an arrogance and complacency which defies imagination today. The men who were commanding the Titanic simply refused to believe the warnings they were receiving.

In fact when the Leyland liner Californian tried to warn the Titanic of the icy conditions the Titanic's wireless operator cut him off saying, "Shut up, shut up. I'm busy!". The Californian later turned off its wireless for the evening and when the Titanic frantically called for help later that evening, the Californian did not hear her.

Even though the Californian was only around 10 miles away and could no doubt have saved many of the Titanic's victims, she had her ears off and did not respond to the frantic calls from the sinking ship.

How this reminds us of the situation we see so many men and women in today. God's Word warns us that this life is short. Eternity is forever. Without making provision for our salvation through Christ we are damned and on our way to a devil's hell.

God's Word also warns us that, like the Californian with its radio turned off, there may come a time when we have resisted God's spirit for the last time. I remember a man at the mission who would listen very respectfully to the gospel presentation, but he would never accept it. It was as if God's Spirit wasn't striving with him any more.

We don't know when we may cross that line. How we need to heed and turn to Christ while the Spirit still calls us.

Each of us should heed the lessons from the tragedy of the Titanic.

Let's be sure we
1. place our trust in God and not in technology.
2. place our trust in God and not wealth / power.
3. share the gospel with those around us.
4. be sure we prepare for the disaster coming upon this old earth.
5. heed the warning from God's Word and accept the safety of salvation through Christ.
If you are here today and you have never accepted Christ as your Lord and Savior, please don't put it off. Don't ignore the warnings God's Word and His servants are sending to you. Accept his offer of salvation while it is still called today. Give him your life and serve Him.

While we sing a hymn of invitation, we invite you to stand or come forward if you don't know for sure that your final destination will be heaven when you depart this life.

375, black book—Just As I Am