

Sermon for Sunday September 13th, 2020

There are scholars who believe that Psalm 103 is a response to the first part of psalm 102. Both are attributed to David.

In Psalm 102 he has it pretty rough...

Do not hide your face from me in the day of my distress...(v. 2)

My heart is stricken and withered like grass...(v.4)

I lie awake; I am like a lonely bird on the housetop. (v.7)

For I eat ashes like bread, and mingle tears with my drink, because of your indignation and anger; for you have lifted me up and thrown me aside. (v.9,10)

My days are like an evening shadow; I wither away like the grass. (v.11)

David, like many of us, associated his misfortune with God's anger. If bad things were happening, God must be unhappy. We relentlessly endeavour to make sense of suffering, because it seems so utterly senseless.

How true this is for our lives in 2020. From wildfires in Australia to wildfires in California. From protests in Hong Kong to protests in the United States. And a pandemic sweeping the globe and changing all of our lives. We cannot help but wonder, is God really, really angry with us?

We may think we have a more sophisticated understanding of suffering than our ancient ancestors. Yet I hear it time and time again, "what have I done to deserve this?"

As you know, we've done lots to deserve what is unfolding this year, but not to God. Climate change, racism, greed - there are always consequences to our actions.

The good news is that this truth is not the final word. There is a bigger truth, a truer truth. And that is the steadfast love of God.

The resolutely firm and unwavering love of God. A love that is slow to anger, merciful and gracious. A love that does not end with accusation or anger, but rather with forgiveness and compassion. A love that doesn't bring judgement and revenge, but rather healing and restoration, vindication for the oppressed.

It may be difficult to see or feel or know this love in the midst of life when our hearts are stricken and withered like grass. Yet we are called, like the psalmist, to remember it and to live from this deeper knowing, this truer truth.

Let what grabs your attention today, what holds your imagination, not be sitting at a distance from one another wearing masks, or being stuck at home because you didn't get a seat at church or have a health condition that precludes you from attending. Rather, whether the words of the psalmist, a phrase in a song, the intention of a prayer, the blessing of being intentionally in God's presence - let the steadfast love of God be your truth, you're starting and ending point today. Let us dwell there and allow our souls to Bless the Lord. We will find ourselves renewed in mercy, healing and love.