

Today Is the Day

April 10, 2020

Psalm 22

As much as we as Christians like to think about our life as “perfect” because of Christ’s presence in it, it’s not. When you think about it, Christ is present in our lives *because* of its inherent imperfection. Christ is present in the lives of billions of people (past, present, and future) around the world because at one time our lives were so far from perfect that we had more-or-less condemned ourselves to Death. We all bear the weight of our sins, those actions and words that separate us from God, that do not reflect the love that we have been shown by God. Though we may not feel the guilt of every wrong that we have committed in life, we are nonetheless aware of our wrongdoings. Though we may have forgiven ourselves of our sins and we know God has forgiven us, we remain knowledgeable of our imperfection, even amidst our being perfectly made in God’s image. Our transgressions are the crosses we all bear in and through life. Such a weight as those crosses in the form of all our sins is too much to bear at times, especially if one has not yet forgiven themselves of one or more of their sins. I imagine this is much the same weight that the psalmist in the reading today felt.

In the apply-named “Suffering Servant Psalm,” the psalmist begins with famous words that Matthew and Mark record Jesus as saying from the Cross: “My God, my God, why have you forsaken me?” In other words, “My God, why have you not protected me from the injustices being done to me? What have I done to deserve this/these affliction(s)?” These are words that strike a particular chord with the human race on the whole, because we cannot help but feel the same way at times. Something goes wrong in our lives and it feels like God has either stopped protecting us or is punishing us for our transgressions. The psalmist then goes on to describe not having their prayers heard, being “a worm,” being scorned and mocked by others, being surrounded by their enemies, and all the other hardships they are experiencing in the moment. We hear these words, and they strike us at our core, because we all know what it is to need forgiveness, either from another or from ourselves. Speaking from experience, the hardest person to convince to forgive you of your transgressions is you. Nonetheless, we know what it is to feel unjustly treated, and this leads us to wonder “Where is God amidst all this pain?” In other words, where is God when we are surrounded by enemies, feeling far off from God, feeling tormented and mocked? When we are in the depths, where is God?

The answer: God is here with us in the depths of our torments. God’s Word entered the world as flesh and bone, walking among us, teaching us, and healing us of all our ills, both the physical and the spiritual. Then, Jesus, the Word made flesh, was shown the greatest of injustices. He, a being who had never done, said, or thought a wrong thing in his life, a living embodiment of both the Law and the prophets, what Paul describes as our “great High Priest” in the epistle reading for today, was put to the ultimate form of execution, one that was meant not only to strike fear in the one being executed, but those who witnessed it. Crucifixion was reserved for the worst of the worst. It was meant to strike fear in all persons that they might not repeat the actions of the one being crucified. Now, the most innocent of persons is being faced with this fatal punishment, and we find the words of Psalm 22 resonate with what Jesus must have been feeling during his arrest, trial, beating, and execution. We can imagine that, though Jesus knew where God was through it all, Jesus’ heart felt that seemingly immeasurable distance

between Creator and creation. Nonetheless, God was there, hanging on the Cross for our sins, that no one else might die, but that all might have eternal life. Out of this most solemn of occasions comes renewed hope, praise, and thanksgiving, all of which are reflected in the psalm reading for today as well.

Starting at the second half of v. 21 to the end, we have the “suffering servant” praising God, saying how the name of the Lord and the deeds of the Lord shall be told of for generations to come, even to those as yet unborn. We see images of the poor eating and being satisfied and all who seek him finding him. In vv. 3-5, God is described as this great ruler and savior. In vv. 9-10, God is described as a caregiver and a midwife of sorts. So, we have a God who answers when called upon, who loves and cares for his children and creation, and who is so great that his name shall be proclaimed into the millennia to come. If God is so great, where else *could* God be on this Good Friday, the day where we remember not only *what* Christ did but *why* he did it, except here, in the depths with us? In the depths of our despair and crying out, where else could a God of Love be except by our side the whole time?

There’s no denying that today is a solemn occasion. However, today is also a day for celebration. Today is the day where we are reminded that, not only have we been sinful to the point of damnation at points in history and still are sinful to varying degrees here and now, but that the one Jesus called “Abba,” “Father,” this same God meets us in the depths of our sinfulness and redeems us. Today is the day we remember that “God so loved the world that he gave his only Son that those who believe in him may not perish but have everlasting life.” Today, we are reminded that, though our world was in Sin and still is, Jesus was not sent to condemn it but to save it. Out of the depths of our sin and need for forgiveness, we call out to a God that has already forgiven us. In short, today is the day that we see the wholehearted and immeasurable love of God for his creation on display for all persons to see. Therefore, let us remember that love as we lay to rest past grudges and enmities, forgiving those who need our forgiveness, including ourselves, just as God has forgiven us through Christ. **This is the day that the Lord has made. Let rejoice and be glad in it. Amen.**