

Psalm 22: 1-15

My God, my God, why have you forsaken me? Why are you so far from helping me, from the words of my groaning?

O my God, I cry by day, but you do not answer; and by night, but find no rest.

Yet you are holy, enthroned on the praises of Israel.

In you our ancestors trusted; they trusted, and you delivered them.

To you they cried, and were saved; in you they trusted, and were not put to shame.

But I am a worm, and not human; scorned by others, and despised by the people.

All who see me mock at me; they make mouths at me, they shake their heads;

“Commit your cause to the LORD; let him deliver— let him rescue the one in whom he delights!”

Yet it was you who took me from the womb; you kept me safe on my mother’s breast.

On you I was cast from my birth, and since my mother bore me you have been my God.

Do not be far from me, for trouble is near and there is no one to help.

Many bulls encircle me, strong bulls of Bashan surround me;

they open wide their mouths at me, like a ravening and roaring lion.

I am poured out like water, and all my bones are out of joint; my heart is like wax; it is melted within my breast;

my mouth is dried up like a potsherd, and my tongue sticks to my jaws; you lay me in the dust of death.

Hear what the Spirit is saying to the Church

THANKS BE TO GOD

We will be dipping into the Psalms this month, with just two months to go before the cycle of the Christian Seasons begins again with Advent. In this season of Ordinary Time, the texts of the lectionary are given to more deeply ground us in the understanding of how faith leavens our day to day ordinary lives, how the light of the Divine can infuse our ordinary, day to day, lives with grace and hope and peace and of course, love.

Today's text is one of the more familiar of the Psalms. That very striking opening line of desperation is a prayer Jesus prays as he is being crucified according to both Mark and Matthew's Gospels. We are certain, of course, that Jesus was steeped in the Hebrew Scriptures, he regularly quotes them and riffs on them as we see him in the Gospel accounts. And so it is that at the moment of his deepest most desperate darkness, he has a prayer.

He has a prayer.

A prayer given to him by a community which has written it down and placed it together with other prayers and stories cherished by the community, stories of the community's ever evolving and ever expanding experience of God, the community's ever deepening faith in God.

We cannot be sure what the circumstances were that our psalmist was enduring. Clearly the psalmist is fearing for his or her life and in a very frightening and seemingly helpless situation. His pleas for God's help are not being answered, and the situation is deteriorating.

But look at the lines I've underlined in the handout. Lost in the darkness, and bereft of any sense of God's presence or assistance, nevertheless, he clings in a profoundly moving way to the conviction that **THERE IS A CARING DIVINE REALITY AT WORK BECAUSE HIS COMMUNITY HAS EXPERIENCED THIS GOD'S CARE MANY TIMES AND TAUGHT HIM THAT THE SIMPLE REALITY OF HIS EXISTENCE IS IN FACT A MIRACLE, AN ACT, A CHOICE OF GOD'S.**

The psalmist's community, the collective faith and shared memory of the community is providing our psalmist with a capacity to pray to a God he has completely lost sight of but who he knows is somehow real and somehow present because the community has testified to such a God's existence, the community is in fact proof of God's existence, he himself is proof of God's existence because the community has told him this, and so he clings to that, it's all he has...but it's enough to enable his prayer.

When all is lost, friends, when the darkness is overwhelming, when desperation threatens to suffocate, it's community that can remind us to keep breathing with hope. That's what I see happening in those underlined passages.

Then there is the question-----can there be anything redemptive, anything useful, anything life-giving in suffering? That sounds odd to say in our contemporary pain averse culture pitching all kinds of products intended to relieve or eliminate suffering (and some of these are wonderful-----like healing drugs. But baby back ribs and Doritos are actually also sold to us as "comfort.") I'm not sure anyone has ever NOT experienced pain and suffering whether physical or emotional and so the question arises-----can suffering have meaning? Can suffering be useful? Can suffering be life giving?

As I was working with this text I was nudged by the Spirit to go back to a book I had recently read entitled ON THE BRINK OF EVERYTHING by Parker Palmer, a teacher and theologian, who is in his 80's now. It's a book about being old, basically---his reflections on his life with its share of suffering, particularly a life-long struggle with clinical depression and his thoughts on mortality. Here is one of the many wise lines he pens in the book:

“The broken open heart is a place of spiritual alchemy, where the dross of hard experience can be transformed into the gold of wisdom.”

He goes on to share the three poems I've provided in the handout today. Poems written from this perspective, that suffering can lead us, by God's grace, to....well....maybe....to God's very self

Certainly to a deeper place in us where God is waiting to be experienced in tender intimacy and fragility and assurance. Certainly to a place in us where we can begin to trust with more of ourselves the reality of a light that no darkness can extinguish, as John's Gospel proclaims.

The psalmist who prays “My God My God why have you forsaken me” finds his way later in the Psalm to: “You are my praise in the great assembly”

And Jesus who prays “My God My God why have you forsaken me” finds his way to: “Into your hands I commit my Spirit.”

Leonard Cohen sings: “Forget your perfect offering, there is a crack in everything, that's how the light gets in.”

But it's a line he borrowed from none other than our friend Rumi.

I said--what about my eyes?

God said--keep them on the road

I said--what about my passion?

God said--keep it burning

I said--what about my heart?

God said--tell me what you hold inside it?

I said--pain and sorrow

God said--stay with it, the wound is the place where the light enters you.

SHAPED BY GOD'S WORD-GRACED AT CHRIST'S TABLE

NORTH OAK CHRISTIAN CHURCH-DISCIPLS OF CHRIST

October 14, 2018

In Jesus' Name, Greetings!

Music for Gathering

Blessed are you, God of all creation

SOURCE OF ALL MERCIES, FOUNT OF LOVE BEYOND ALL MEASURE

You formed us as your image of love in the world

WITH THE WHOLE COMPANY OF HEAVEN WE JOIN

THE GLAD SONG OF UNCEASING PRAISE

Lighting of the Candles

"I have come as light into the world..."

John 12: 46

27 Come Thou Almighty King

We Welcome One Another as Christ

115 There's Something About That Name

The Morning Prayer and Choral Response

Silence

"O my God, and my rest from all pains, how entranced I am!"

Teresa of Avila

Children's Circle

All children thru 5th grade are welcome to come forward. A small outreach offering will be collected for our money jar. Following this time of sharing and prayer, children may attend their very own "Worship and Wonder" time together in our classroom annex. Child care is offered for infants and toddlers but they are also welcome in the sanctuary.

Prayer for Illumination

May the coming of the Holy Spirit be upon our lives

MAY THE HEARING OF THE HOLY SPIRIT BE IN OUR EARS, AMEN

THE LESSON PSALM 22: 1-15

The Meditation "Stay With It" Rev. Rob Carr

Tender and Wise Creator, Your knowledge of us is infinite, and Your love for us is boundless. Awaken us to see each other and every human being through Your eyes. You have placed us within human families and incorporated us into the beloved household of faith. We rejoice that You have called us to be brothers and sisters to each other. Today we renew our commitment to the healing of the human family, through the grace of Christ, Your firstborn, our elder brother and companion.

Amen.

Silent and spoken personal prayers of thanksgiving confession, intercession

"Amani" (This is our song of peace) NOCC Choir

The Offering

Praise God from Whom all blessings flow, Praise God all creatures here below

Praise God above ye heavenly host, Creator, Christ, and Holy Ghost

CELEBRATION OF HOLY COMMUNION

We are Disciples of Christ, a movement for wholeness in a fragmented world.
As part of the one body of Christ, we welcome all to the Lord's Table as God has welcomed us.

254 Breathe on me Breath of God

Gracious God, Source of all blessings, you have been extravagant in your generosity
YOU HAVE PLANTED WITHIN US THE SEEDS OF HOPE AND SPREAD BEFORE US
THIS FEAST OF ALL POSSIBILITY
Words cannot express our gratitude
MAY WE EMBODY OUR THANKS WITH ACTS OF COMPASSION FOR ONE ANOTHER

Welcome to the Table
The Words of Institution

Lord Jesus Christ restore us to our rightful minds
YOU CROWN US WITH FORGIVENESS AND WE ARE AMAZED
Holy God to you we come
A PEOPLE RENEWED, FORGIVEN, SURRENDERED

The Communion Prayer

The Lord's Prayer

Our Father, who art in heaven, hallowed be thy name. Thy kingdom come, Thy will be done on earth, as it is in heaven. Give us this day our daily bread, and forgive us our sins as we forgive those who sin against us. And lead us not into temptation, but deliver us from evil. For Thine is the kingdom, and the power, and the glory forever, amen.

Following the Lord's Prayer, please come forward by rows to receive the loaf and the cup.

The cup is non-alcoholic by choice of the congregation
Gluten free crackers are available on the table for those who prefer this option
Children also celebrate communion weekly as part of "Worship and Wonder"

276 We Gather Together

Strong is the love embracing us
AND FAITHFUL OUR GOD FROM MORNING TO NIGHT---AMEN

TO OUR GUESTS----WELCOME!

SHAPED BY GOD'S WORD AND GRACED AT CHRIST'S TABLE
WE WALK HUMBLY, LOVE DEEPLY, LIVE SIMPLY, AND SERVE JOYFULLY

We are delighted to include you today. Your presence and participation is a gift to us all. We hope you experience among us the warm spirit of our family of faith and the gracious touch of Christ upon your life. Refreshments and welcoming conversation are available before and after worship in the Community Room just down the hall. More information about NOCC and the Disciples of Christ is available via Facebook and these websites

www.nocckc.org www.kcdisciples.org www.disciples.org

OUR LIFE TOGETHER

THIS WEEK

Today 130PM CROP Walk with Northland Disciples Youth
Monday 6PM Troop 900
Tuesday 945AM Men's Bible Group
Tuesday 1230PM Women's Bible Group
Tuesday 6PM Pack 900
Wednesday 7PM Music Ministry
THURSDAY 5-8PM FULLER CENTER BBQ EVENT AT GLADSTONE COMMUNITY CENTER
Friday 6PM –Saturday 9AM Troop 900 Lock In
Saturday 9AM-noon Disciples Women's Prayer Retreat @ First Christian NKC

CHERITH BROOK-----THE LATEST

Volunteer teams are being formed to help at Cherith Brook as they work with KC's homeless from their location on East 12th street. Teams are needed to help take care of shower facilities, do laundry, cook breakfast, tend the garden, food rescue from local grocers and building maintenance.
CURRENT WISH LIST: Men's Underwear, women's sports bras, tennis shoes, small men's pants, mugs, cups, forks, dish soap, sugar, butter, bus passes, ibuprofen, reading glasses, bike locks.

UPCOMING

DUE TODAY

Thanks to everyone who submitted 2019 Estimates of Giving to Suzanne Bunnell

TALL OAKS GALA AT ARROWHEAD---JOIN US!

It's time to RESERVE your seat for the 2018 Tall Oaks Masquerade Gala! The evening of November 9th at Arrowhead Stadium North Club will be full of fellowship, food, auctions, and the magic of whimsical disguise. Your presence is primary to the support of a unique ministry and the future evolution of Tall Oaks for children and the community. Plan on having a fun night! Don't forget your mask! Don't forget to sign up!

Sunday October 28 Trunk or Treat with Chili! 5-7PM
Friday November 16 STRUM at Westport Presbyterian Arts Series 12noon
Brownbag Lunch

SOWING A SEED-GROWING OUR VISION 2016-2018

Our campaign prayer: We want what you want God. Open each heart and mind to Christ, our Light.
Guide us together by your Holy Spirit, to trust in your will, amen.

Lead

Here is a story
to break your heart.
Are you willing?
This winter
the loons came to our harbor
and died, one by one,
of nothing we could see.
A friend told me
of one on the shore
that lifted its head and opened
the elegant beak and cried out
in the long, sweet savoring of its life
which, if you have heard it,
you know is a sacred thing,
and for which, if you have not heard it,
you had better hurry to where
they still sing.
And, believe me, tell no one
just where that is.
The next morning
this loon, speckled
and iridescent and with a plan
to fly home
to some hidden lake,
was dead on the shore.
I tell you this
to break your heart,
by which I mean only
that it break open and never close again
to the rest of the world.

Mary Oliver

Autumn

*The leaves are falling, falling as if from far up,
As if orchards were dying high in space.
Each leaf falls as if it were motioning "no."*

*And tonight the heavy earth is falling
Away from all other stars in the loneliness.*

*We're all falling. This hand here is falling.
And look at the other one. It's in them all.*

*And yet there is Someone, whose hands
infinitely calm, holding up all this falling.*

Rainer Maria Rilke

The Guest House

*This being human is a guest house.
Every morning a new arrival.*

*A joy, a depression, a meanness,
some momentary awareness comes
as an unexpected visitor.*

*Welcome and entertain them all!
Even if they're a crowd of sorrows,
who violently sweep your house
empty of its furniture,
still, treat each guest honorably.
He may be clearing you out
for some new delight.*

*The dark thought, the shame, the malice,
meet them at the door laughing,
and invite them in.*

*Be grateful for whoever comes,
because each has been sent
as a guide from beyond.*

Rumi