A person sitting on a bench looking at a rainbow in the sky

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Lectionary Passages:

Psalm 118:1-2, 19-29

Jeremiah 33:1-9

Philippians 2:12-18

Selected Verses:

 I thank you that you have answered me  
    and have become my salvation.  
The stone that the builders rejected  
    has become the chief cornerstone. – Psalm 118: 21-22

I will cleanse them from all the guilt of their sin against me, and I will forgive all the guilt of their sin and rebellion against me. – Jeremiah 33: 8

Work out your own salvation with fear and trembling; for it is God who is at work in you, enabling you both to will and to work for his good pleasure. – Philippians 2: 12-13

Devotional:

After the great hymn of Christ, and Paul calling us to have a mind like Christ, he calls us to work our salvation out with fear and trembling. While it is easy to take this to mean that we must work on our salvation, and salvation is something to be earned, we have to remember the context that this is set. Paul is writing to a church that he founded several years before, and report has come to him that there are differences within the church. Any time you get a group of people together, there will be differences and conflict. Especially if some of these people are different nationalities, different economical classes, and different upbringings.

In the differences, Paul is urging them to express in their community a dramatic demonstration of their salvation given and promised to them. Paul is telling them, and telling us that in Jesus Christ, we have been saved. Always live with that in mind. The person next to you is a beloved child of God. Even if you disagree and especially when you disagree, view them, and view yourself as a saved child of God.

Paul uses three words to describe people following God: blameless, innocent and without blemish. To get these words, Paul takes the words, blame, flaw, and fault and puts the letter “a” in front of them. In English with this means “anti” or “without” without blame, without flaw without fault. To have a distinctive quality that is different than the world.

Paul is calling us to live differently, realizing that salvation is a gift that we work together to glorify and serve God. While salvation is a gift given from God by grace through faith, we are called to live into, to work out, our salvation. Some think all we need to do is accept Jesus and we are saved. Or that God loves us just the way we are. God does love us, yet He loves us enough that he wants us to grow into the relationship with God and one another.

In Christ, we are made righteous. We are given the gift of righteousness. In other words, we are in a right relationship with God. Forgiven and adopted as a child of God. Yet, Sanctification is working into that salvation. It is continuing to align our lives to be the children God has created us to be. This mean continually working toward unity in Christ.

This is done with fear and trembling. Now that Paul is no longer with them, he encourages them to have reverent obedience in their faith. Fear and trembling are to have great respect for God and His gift of grace. In Christ’s death and resurrection, we respond with lives worthy of children of God. In the end, our salvation is a gift that we live a life giving praise to God for hearing our cry for help.

Prayer:

Guide our feet, holy God, on your path, for we are tempted to stray. We turn toward the cheap success, the fleeting fame, the passing fad. We are always looking to someone, or some purchase, or some experience to fill our souls. But nothing lasts except the constant pull of your love. Holy God, tune our hearts to your commands, fill our minds with your counsels, keep our eyes on Jesus, our companion and guide. Amen.