

Wednesday, April 1, 2020

Daily Lectionary Passages:

Psalm 143; Jeremiah 32:1-9, 36-41 &
Matthew 22:23-33

Psalm 143 (NRSV)

Hear my prayer, O Lord;
give ear to my supplications in your faithfulness;
answer me in your righteousness.
Do not enter into judgment with your servant,
for no one living is righteous before you.
For the enemy has pursued me,
crushing my life to the ground,
making me sit in darkness like those long dead.
Therefore my spirit faints within me;
my heart within me is appalled.
I remember the days of old,
I think about all your deeds,
I meditate on the works of your hands.
I stretch out my hands to you;
my soul thirsts for you like a parched land.
Answer me quickly, O Lord;
my spirit fails.
Do not hide your face from me,
or I shall be like those who go down to the Pit.
Let me hear of your steadfast love in the morning,
for in you I put my trust.
Teach me the way I should go,
for to you I lift up my soul.
Save me, O Lord, from my enemies;
I have fled to you for refuge.
Teach me to do your will,
for you are my God.
Let your good spirit lead me
on a level path.
For your name's sake, O Lord, preserve my life.
In your righteousness bring me out of trouble.
In your steadfast love cut off my enemies,
and destroy all my adversaries,
for I am your servant.



Thought:

The prayer begins focusing on the enemies, and the struggles of the writer. All too often, the struggles of life are before our eyes. This happens when we have the news on all day, or when we are going through health or financial struggles.

By the end of the end of the prayer, the focus is on God: the one who preserves our life eternal, the one who is righteous and brings us through the storms, the one who has destroyed all our adversaries, even death itself. When our eyes and our heart focus on God in prayer, we return to being God's servant, trusting that He is in control and with us in the midst of the enemy. God has the final word.

Jeremiah 32:1-9, 36-41 (NRSV)

The word that came to Jeremiah from the Lord in the tenth year of King Zedekiah of Judah, which was the eighteenth year of Nebuchadnezzar. At that time the army of the king of Babylon was besieging Jerusalem, and the prophet Jeremiah was confined in the court of the guard that was in the palace of the king of Judah, where King Zedekiah of Judah had confined him. Zedekiah had said, "Why do you prophesy and say: Thus says the Lord: I am going to give this city into the hand of the king of Babylon, and he shall take it; King Zedekiah of Judah shall not escape out of the hands of the Chaldeans, but shall surely be given into the hands of the king of Babylon, and shall speak with him face to face and see him eye to eye; and he shall take Zedekiah to Babylon, and there he shall remain until I attend to him, says the Lord; though you fight against the Chaldeans, you shall not succeed?"

Jeremiah said, The word of the Lord came to me: Hanamel son of your uncle Shallum is going to come to you and say, "Buy my field that is at Anathoth, for the right of redemption by purchase is yours." Then my cousin Hanamel came to me in the court of the guard, in accordance with the word of the Lord, and said to me, "Buy my field that is at Anathoth in the land of Benjamin, for the right of possession and redemption is yours; buy it for yourself." Then I knew that this was the word of the Lord.

And I bought the field at Anathoth from my cousin Hanamel, and weighed out the money to him, seventeen shekels of silver.

Now therefore thus says the Lord, the God of Israel, concerning this city of which you say, "It is being given into the hand of the king of Babylon by the sword, by famine, and by pestilence": See, I am going to gather them from all the lands to which I drove them in my anger and my wrath and in great indignation; I will bring them back to this place, and I will settle them in safety. They shall be my people, and I will be their God. I will give them one heart and one way, that they may fear me for all time, for their own good and the good of their children after them. I will make an everlasting covenant with them, never to draw back from doing good to them; and I will put the fear of me in their hearts, so that they may not turn from me. I will rejoice in doing good to them, and I will plant them in this land in faithfulness, with all my heart and all my soul.

Thought:

All too often, we think that nothing can happen to us because we are Christians. We quote scripture, "If God is for us, who can be against us?" To a greater degree, that is what King Zedekiah thought. God had promised Israel the Promised Land. God would never take it away. Yet, Israel had not followed God, and God was punishing them and taking them into exile. Even so, suffering is not the final answer. The day will come when Israel will return to the Promised Land. Jeremiah was willing to buy land, knowing that he or his decedents would eventually have the land. When we are going through difficult times, we can trust that God is faithful to his covenant. All too often, we think everything and every day will go well for followers of God.

This passage calls us to repent when we sin, and trust God and have faith in the future in the midst of struggles.

Matthew 22:23-33 (NRSV)

The same day some Sadducees came to him, saying there is no resurrection; and they asked him a question, saying, “Teacher, Moses said, ‘If a man dies childless, his brother shall marry the widow, and raise up children for his brother.’ Now there were seven brothers among us; the first married, and died childless, leaving the widow to his brother. The second did the same, so also the third, down to the seventh. Last of all, the woman herself died. In the resurrection, then, whose wife of the seven will she be? For all of them had married her.” Jesus answered them, “You are wrong, because you know neither the scriptures nor the power of God. For in the resurrection they neither marry nor are given in marriage, but are like angels in heaven. And as for the resurrection of the dead, have you not read what was said to you by God, ‘I am the God of Abraham, the God of Isaac, and the God of Jacob’? He is God not of the dead, but of the living.” And when the crowd heard it, they were astounded at his teaching.

Thought:

The two political/religious groups in Israel during the time of Jesus were the Pharisees and the Sadducees. The Pharisees believed in the resurrection. The Sadducees did not (and that is why they are “sad you see.” Here they are using the Scriptures to test Jesus. The Old Testament required the above situation. If one brother has no children, upon his death, his brother must marry the widow, and any son born would be the heir of the first brother. In response, Jesus gives us a glimpse of heaven, one of the few in scripture. We will be like angels, in the presence of God. Beyond that, heaven is indescribable. In Christ, we have life and life eternal.

Prayer:

Righteous God, our eyes are filled with our adversaries. We watch the news and see the mounting toll of this virus. We feel trapped in our homes. We are hemmed in on each side, with nowhere to turn. Open our eyes and our hearts to your saving grace. May we focus on you, your love for us, your gift of salvation. May we trust that you have overcome all. Give us faith to trust that you have plans that we do not understand.

Almighty God, we pray for first responders, police officers, firefighters, nurses and doctors. Give them the energy and wisdom during this time. We pray for the men and women who are working away from home, especially those in the military that are working so that we may have freedom. May we use our freedom to worship and serve you.

(Spend time in silent prayer, praying for those you know. Name them before God and place them in God’s loving arms).

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 debts, as we forgive our debtors; and lead us not into temptation, but deliver us from evil. For thine is the kingdom, and the power, and the glory, forever. Amen.