

**Great is Thy Faithfulness**  
Fifth Sunday after Pentecost, Year B  
Lamentations 3:22-33; 2 Corinthians 8:1-9, 12-15; Mark 5:21-43  
June 27, 2021

*Grace, mercy and peace to you from God our Father and our Lord and Savior, Jesus Christ. Amen.*

The last couple of weeks we have talked about fear. And, why not. We all experience it. Not only that, but almost every bit of the Scriptures were written by or for people who are afraid, distressed, in turmoil, pain, or disbelief.

This is why our Holy Scriptures are so wonderful. They do not gloss over those things, but realize that they are reality. They are real.

We may not be experiencing the same trials, temptations, fears and failures as those in each book, but the fact that they, the people who received a mention, whose lives are chronicled, whose mishaps have been studied and scrutinized for millennia, shows us that our God understands that we suffer.

As we heard last week, when Jesus was asleep in the boat in the midst of a storm, that He rests because it isn't a surprise to Him. He is in control.

We are the ones who do not know how everything will play out. We are the ones who do not have the power to change ever trouble that we encounter in life. And, that causes us fear and distress.

We are, in some ways, jealous of God. We want what He's got. We want to control our own destinies. We want to chart our own course. We want to say what is good and right for me.

After all, don't we know what we need more than anyone else... even God? My happiness is the most important thing. Therefore, I can, and will, do what makes me happy. Isn't that what God wants for me? To be happy?

No. God does not want you to just be happy. He wants you to be fulfilled. He wants you to be blessed. He wants you to be safe. He wants you to be His. Yet, our happiness has become our idol. We worship it at all costs.

So, and I say this with love, suffer, endure pain, receive hardship, and, thereby, sacrifice that idol of happiness.

Jeremiah, who wrote Lamentations, where our OT reading is this morning, was not a stranger to suffering. He is often referred to as the weeping prophet.

Jeremiah was given the task of preaching repentance to a people who would not listen. He prophesied their demise. And, as any God fearing pastor would do, he wept for their destruction.

Seeing Jeremiah as the weeping prophet is certainly proper. He is not unlike us. We, too, suffer.

Unfortunately, we cannot completely relate to Jeremiah. He suffered for the sake of God and a love for God's people. I'm not sure we suffer much just for being Christian. At least, not in such a harsh and bitter way.

This is, certainly, a blessing. But, unfortunately our suffering is often more selfish. In our culture, everyone is a victim. This is another of our idols.

"Oh, whoa is me. I am so oppressed. My internet is down. I can't login to my social media. My tv show was cancelled." For many of us, this is suffering. And, things just as petty as these, cause us great distress and a crisis of faith. So, when serious things come up, like being caught on the sea in a great storm and you fear you are going to drown and be destroyed... how, then, would your faith hold up?

Yes, most of our suffering is personal, and, also, often, very petty. But, when God's people are persecuted, we suffer together. At least, we should. But, Even there, when, as is truly happening in our world right now, our brothers and sisters are persecuted, beheaded, raped, tortured, enslaved... we do not weep or cry out to our God. No, we simply shrug and go right back to our own pitiful sufferings... where's the waitress, they didn't get my order right... my steak is too cold.

But, Jeremiah wept for God's people and their coming exile and destruction. A foreshadowing, of Jesus' own shedding of tears for Jerusalem and her people. And, we see it today as Jesus shares the burdens of those around Him; those who crowded Him, those who cried out to Him, those who sought out His help.

Yes, I suppose, Jeremiah is the weeping prophet.

But, God never calls him that. No, God has another name for Jeremiah. A name that you've probably never called him or heard him called. Instead of seeing him as we do, as the weeping, mourning, lamenting, languishing prophet, God calls him the 'fortified' prophet... Kinda.

*"And I, behold, I make you [Jeremiah] this day a fortified city, an iron pillar, and bronze walls, against the whole land, against the kings of Judah, its officials, its priests, and the people of the land"* (Jeremiah 1:18).

Jeremiah stood alone. Just as we often feel. Alone.

In the hospital waiting room hoping for a positive word. At the bedside of a loved one whose voyage through this earthly life is coming to an end. When friends or family have turned against you. When you see the travesties of a corrupt and broken world. When you fear the Russians or the Chinese, the Germans or illegal aliens, the Democrats or the Republicans, the Liberals or the

Conservatives. Or, hopefully, when you see the disdain for God and His love by, even, His own people.

Instead of being the victim. Get to know the Victor.

Weep. Yes, weep. There is nothing wrong with weeping. There is nothing wrong with lamenting. There is nothing wrong with repenting and crying out. In fact, we should do these things. We should have the humility to bring our troubles to God, we should be meek enough to seek out God on behalf of our hurting brothers and sisters. This is loving God and loving our neighbor.

Today, as always, we only get to hear a part of Jeremiah's words. In fact, this is the only time we hear from the book of Lamentations in our entire lectionary. So, knowing all that is happening is a bit hard. But, Jeremiah had been lamenting. He was crying out to God and was saying exactly how he felt. He called God a bear or a lion, lying in wait to devour him. He said that God was shooting arrows that were filling his kidneys.

In other words, Jeremiah was hurting. He was hurting bad. He was in great distress and anguish. He, obviously felt alone.

But, instead of crying out in disbelief. He was crying out in great belief and resounding faith. Just a few verses before our reading he says, *"Remember my affliction and my wanderings, the wormwood and the gall! My soul continually remembers it and is bowed down within me. But this I call to mind, and therefore I have hope"* (Lamentations 3:19–21).

"And therefore I have hope"... Where is Jeremiah's hope? What causes his change in outlook.

It comes within one word, "remember." He cries out to God and says, "*Remember my affliction...*". Why is this important? Why does this change Jeremiah's perspective?

Because Jeremiah knows his God. He knows that his God sleeps because everything is under control. He knows that while things look bad, God is not far away. He knows that he has cried out to God. He knows that God has heard him. He knows God will remember.

And when God remembers, He acts. He doesn't just recall it in His mind. It is a call to action.

So, Jeremiah goes, almost immediately, from the weeping prophet to the fortified prophet. Fortified because he knows, pardon me, that "A Mighty Fortress Is Our God."

It is much easier to stand when you have the Creator and Conqueror at your back. When a host of His angels stand at your side, you can do much.

St. Paul explains, "*I have learned in whatever situation I am to be content. I know how to be brought low, and I know how to abound. In any and every circumstance, I have learned the secret of facing plenty and hunger, abundance and need. I can do all things through him who strengthens me*" (Philippians 4:11-13).

David writes, "*I lift up my eyes to the hills. From where does my help come? My help comes from the LORD, who made heaven and earth*" (Psalm 121:1-2).

And, one of my favorite prayers in all of Scripture, "*I believe; help my unbelief*" (Mark 9:24b).

It is okay to lament, to cry out to God and to say, "My faith is faltering. My trust is trembling. Remember me. I believe; help my unbelief."

Because, He will remember you. He will help you. He has, after all, sent us Jesus. He has, after all, sent us His Holy Spirit. He has, after all, sent us His Word and Sacraments; His means of Grace.

Will we, do we, have trouble in this world? Yes. Will that change? No. But, we can look to people like Jeremiah, St. Paul, King David. We can cry and lament. Because, when we do, we are seeking the face of our God. And, He will hear us.

*"The steadfast love of the Lord never ceases; his mercies never come to an end; they are new every morning; great is your faithfulness"* (Lamentations 3:22–23).

*Now may the peace that passes all understanding, guard your hearts and your minds in Christ Jesus.  
Amen.*



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