

PSALM 40:1-9

¹ I waited patiently for the Lord; he turned to me and heard my cry. ² He lifted me out of the slimy pit, out of the mud and mire; he set my feet on a rock and gave me a firm place to stand. ³ He put a new song in my mouth, a hymn of praise to our God. Many will see and fear the Lord and put their trust in him. ⁴ Blessed is the one who trusts in the Lord, who does not look to the proud, to those who turn aside to false gods. ⁵ Many, Lord my God, are the wonders you have done, the things you planned for us. None can compare with you; were I to speak and tell of your deeds, they would be too many to declare. ⁶ Sacrifice and offering you did not desire—but my ears you have opened—burnt offerings and sin offerings you did not require. ⁷ Then I said, “Here I am, I have come—it is written about me in the scroll. ⁸ I desire to do your will, my God your law is within my heart.” ⁹ I proclaim your saving acts in the great assembly; I do not seal my lips, Lord, as you know.

JOHN 1:29-42 ---²⁹ The next day John saw Jesus coming toward him and said, “Look, the Lamb of God, who takes away the sin of the world! ³⁰ This is the one I meant when I said, ‘A man who comes after me has surpassed me because he was before me.’ ³¹ I myself did not know him, but the reason I came baptizing with water was that he might be revealed to Israel.” ³² Then John said “I saw the Spirit come down from heaven as a dove and remain on him. ³³ And I myself did not know him, but the one who sent me to baptize with water told me, ‘The man on whom you see the Spirit come down and remain is the one who will baptize with the Holy Spirit.’ ³⁴ I have seen and I testify that this is God’s Chosen One.” ³⁵ The next day John was there again with two of his disciples. ³⁶ When he saw Jesus passing by, he said, “Look, the Lamb of God!” ³⁷ When the two disciples heard him say this, they followed Jesus. ³⁸ Turning around, Jesus saw them following and asked, “What do you want?” They said, “Rabbi”, “where are you staying?” ³⁹ “Come,” he replied, “and you will see.” So they went and saw where he was staying, and they spent that day with him. It was about four in the afternoon. ⁴⁰ Andrew, Simon Peter’s brother, was one of the two who heard what John had said and who had followed Jesus. ⁴¹ The first thing Andrew did was to find his brother Simon...⁴² And he brought him to Jesus....

THE BOOK “SAILBOAT CHURCH” BY JOAN GRAY WAS INSPIRED BY THE FIRST CENTURY SYMBOL FOR THE CHRISTIAN CHURCH, WHICH WAS A BOAT.

SHE SEES EVERY CHURCH, OF ANY KIND OR SIZE, TO BE EITHER A ROWBOAT OR A SAILBOAT.

ROWBOAT CHURCHES FOCUS MOSTLY ON CIRCUMSTANCES AND WHAT THEY CAN AND CANNOT DO THEMSELVES.

ANOTHER CHRISTIAN SAID ABOUT THE ROWBOAT VIEW OF THE CHURCH: “THE POWER OF GOD IS A SOURCE WE SELDOM EVER ATTEMPT TO USE.

WE ALWAYS TRY TO DO EVERYTHING ON OUR OWN. IT IS AS IF WE SAY TO GOD, WE DON’T BELIEVE YOU ARE CAPABLE OF HANDLING THIS....”

SAILBOAT CHURCHES FOCUS MORE ON GOD AND THEIR PARTNERSHIP WITH THE LORD, FOR WHOM NOTHING THAT IS WITHIN HIS WILL IS IMPOSSIBLE

SAILBOAT CHURCHES DO WHAT THEY CAN WITH THE HELP OF THE HOLY SPIRIT, AND LET GOD DO THE REST.

A POEM CALLED “THE HAND OF GOD,” BY GERTRUDE JEFFERIES REFLECTS THE SAILBOAT ATTITUDE.

“IT IS NOT FOR ME TO MARK THE PATH THAT IS BEST FOR ME TO TAKE. FOR I KNOW NOT WHERE THE PITFALLS LIE THAT WOULD PUT MY LIFE AT STAKE.

IT IS NOT FOR ME TO SAY WHAT COMES WHETHER IT’S JOY OR SORROW. FOR MY FATHER HAS FOR ME A PLAN TODAY, AND FOR TOMORROW.

I AM COVERED BY THE HAND OF GOD, I WILL NOT FEAR, COME WHAT MAY. FOR MY FATHER KNOWS WHAT’S UP AHEAD AND I KNOW HE LEADS THE WAY.

AND SHOULD THE PLANS THAT HE HAS FOR ME, NOT BE MY CHOICE OR DESIRE, EVEN SO I KNOW HE MAKES A WAY THOUGH I WALK THROUGH FLOOD OR FIRE.

YES, I AM SAFE IN THE HAND OF GOD TODAY. AND THOSE THAT HAVE PASSED. AND WE'LL WALK TOGETHER ALL THE WAY AS LONG AS THIS LIFE SHALL LAST.

AND WHEN AT LAST MY JOURNEY IS DONE, I SHALL SEE HIM FACE TO FACE, AND PRAISE HIM FOR ALL ETERNITY FOR HIS UNMERITED GRACE.”

THE POEM ALSO REFLECTS THE READING FROM PSALM 40. THE PSALM SPEAKS ABOUT TRUSTING OUR LIVES TO THE HANDS OF THE ALMIGHTY, WHO KNOWS AND LOVES US.

TRUSTING IN AND FOLLOWING JESUS IS WHAT CHRISTIANS ARE ALSO CALLED TO DO, FOR HE IS THE ONE WHO HAS RESCUED US.

THE PIT MENTIONED IN THE PSALM CAN BE ANYTHING IN LIFE THAT CAUSES A SENSE OF HELPLESSNESS OR DESPERATION.

AND THE BOG ARE THOSE THINGS WHICH TRAP US IN THAT SITUATION

IT IS OUR FAITH IN JESUS THAT RESCUES US FROM THIS PERSPECTIVE OF OUR CIRCUMSTANCES, AND PLACES US ON THE SOLID ROCK OF GOD'S GRACE AND LOVE.

THE GOSPEL PASSAGE CONFIRMS THIS. IT REMINDS US THAT JOHN THE BAPTIST, WAS SENT TO PREPARE THE WAY FOR JESUS.

HIS TASK WAS TO POINT OTHERS TO THE ONE THEY OUGHT TO FOLLOW.

JOHN AT TIMES SEEMED CONFUSED BY HOW JESUS WAS GOING TO BRING IN GOD'S JUDGMENT AND RULE.

EVEN SO, HE CLEARLY KNEW JESUS WAS NUMBER ONE, AND THAT HIS TASK WAS TO SEND OTHERS TO JESUS.

SOME OF THE OTHER GOSPELS TELL US JOHN SAID ABOUT JESUS “HE MUST INCREASE, BUT I MUST DECREASE.”

TODAY'S READING FROM THE GOSPEL OF JOHN REVEALS HOW THE BAPTIST PUT THIS KNOWLEDGE INTO PRACTICE EVEN WITH HIS OWN FOLLOWERS.

IT DESCRIBES HOW JOHN POINTED SOME OF HIS DISCIPLES TOWARDS JESUS, THUS ENCOURAGING THEM TO LEAVE HIM AND FOLLOW THE MESSIAH.

JOHN'S INVITATION TO LEAVE HIM FOR JESUS WAS SIGNIFICANT IN THAT HE HAD A STRONG GROUP OF FOLLOWERS, FOR WHOM JOHN FULFILLED A DEEP NEED WITHIN.

YET JOHN CONTINUED TO INSIST HE WAS NOT THE PROMISED MESSIAH, ONLY GOD'S MESSENGER WAS WHO SENT TO POINT THE WAY TO THE LAMB OF GOD.

AND WHILE NOT ALL OF JOHN'S DISCIPLES LEFT HIM FOR JESUS, THE BIBLE INDICATES, ANDREW AND HIS COMPANION LEFT THE BAPTIST AT THE JORDAN RIVER, AND WALKED BEHIND JESUS.

THEY FOLLOWED HIM UNTIL THE SAVIOR TURNED AND ASKED THEM: “WHAT DO YOU SEEK?”

THEIR RESPONSE: “WHERE ARE YOU STAYING?” IMPLIED A DESIRE TO LEARN MORE ABOUT JESUS.

THE SAVIOR RESPONDED TO THEIR NEED WITH HIS INVITATION: “COME AND SEE.” IN THIS WAY THE LORD WELCOMED THEM TO TRAVEL WITH HIM.

JESUS' INVITATION TO THE PAIR OFFERS AN EXAMPLE CHRISTIANS WOULD DO WELL TO COPY. HE LISTENS TO OUR QUESTIONS AND RESPONDS BY ASKING US TO FOLLOW HIM.

TRULY, THE SAVIOR INVITES US TO JOURNEY WITH HIM ALSO; SO THAT WE MAY LEARN WHO HE IS AND WHY HE CAN BE TRUSTED, AND SHOULD BE OBEYED.

BUT WE, LIKE ANDREW AND HIS COMPANION, ALONG WITH MANY OTHERS, MUST ACCEPT CHRIST'S INVITATION TO COME AND SEE WHAT GOD WILL DO.

THIS STORY SUGGESTS TO US THAT WE ALWAYS HAVE MORE THINGS TO LEARN FROM AND ABOUT JESUS AS WE FOLLOW HIM ALONG THE WAY.

INDEED, OUR LEARNING WILL NOT END AS LONG AS WE LIVE ON EARTH. FOR WE CANNOT KNOW THE WHOLE OF GOD'S PLAN.

THE APOSTLE PAUL DESCRIBES THIS VERY WELL IN 1 CORINTHIANS 13:

“FOR NOW WE SEE IN THE MIRROR DIMLY; THEN WE SHALL SEE FACE TO FACE.

NOW I KNOW ONLY IN PART; THEN I SHALL KNOW FULLY, EVEN AS I AM FULLY KNOWN.”

THIS IS THE ESSENCE OF THE JOURNEY TO AND THROUGH LIFE AS A FOLLOWER OF JESUS, WHO CONTINUALLY CALLS US TO “COME AND SEE.”

INDEED, JESUS BIDS US FOLLOW HIS TEACHINGS, AND HIS EXAMPLE BY ALLOWING OURSELVES TO BE LED BY THE HOLY SPIRIT.

YOU SEE, WE NEED TO KEEP LEARNING FROM HIM SO THAT WE MAY CONTINUE TO FOLLOW HIM, AND TO GROW AS A DISCIPLE OF THE LORD.

SCRIPTURE REMINDS US THAT CONFESSING FAITH IN JESUS, AND THEN COMMITTING OUR LIVES TO HIM, IS ONLY ONE STEP ON THE JOURNEY AS HIS FOLLOWERS.

WE ALSO NEED TO TAKE ANOTHER AND ANOTHER STEP-IN WHATEVER DIRECTION THE SPIRIT LEADS US.

AND IN ORDER TO DO THIS- IT IS NECESSARY FOR GOD TO ASK US FROM TIME TO TIME: “WHAT DO YOU SEEK?”

THIS IS INDEED A QUESTION EVEN THE MOST COMMITTED FOLLOWER OF JESUS NEEDS TO THINK ABOUT, FROM TIME TO TIME.

WE MUST DO SO BECAUSE THE ANSWER THAT QUESTION IS LIKELY TO CHANGE AS WE, OR OUR LIVES, CHANGE.

IT IS ALSO EQUALLY IMPORTANT FOR EACH ONE OF US TO ASK THE LORD JESUS SOME QUESTIONS.

WE NEED TO ASK HIM THROUGHOUT OUR LIVES THINGS LIKE: “WHAT ARE YOU CALLING ME TO DO? - WHERE ARE YOU CALLING ME TO GO? - HOW ARE YOU CALLING ME TO RESPOND?”

YES, ASKING AND LISTENING ARE IMPORTANT STEPS IN CONTINUING TO BE LED BY JESUS AS INDIVIDUALS AND AS A CHRISTIAN CHURCH.

CONSIDER THIS ALSO: SOMETIMES WE ARE EMPOWERED TO BE: A FOLLOWER WHO ALSO LEADS. OTHER TIMES WE ARE ONE WHO SIMPLY FOLLOWS, AND THOSE ROLES MAY SWITCH FROM TIME TO TIME.

INDEED, BEING FLEXIBLE ENOUGH TO BE LED BY GOD'S SPIRIT IS A KEY COMPONENT IN BEING A FOLLOWER OF JESUS CHRIST.

CHRIST'S FIRST APOSTLES AND DISCIPLES LEARNED THIS AFTER PENTECOST.

REMEMBER, THEY WERE CONTINUALLY BEING DIRECTED BY THE SPIRIT IN UNEXPECTED AND SOMETIMES UNWELCOME OR UNCOMFORTABLE WAYS.

OF COURSE, WE CAN ALSO CHOOSE TO SIMPLY BE SAVED AND REMAIN A TODDLER IN THE FAITH.

HOWEVER, DOING SO WILL CAUSE US TO MISS OUT ON SO MUCH OF WHAT THE LORD WANTS TO GIVE US, AS WELL AS ON WHAT HE DESIRES US TO DO IN HIS NAME.

A STORY THAT APPEARED ON THE INTERNET ILLUSTRATES THE DRAWBACKS OF STAYING A TODDLER IN FAITH.

THERE WAS A MAN WHO WAS A PROSPECTOR, WHO SPENT YEARS MINING FOR GOLD

THEN, ONE BEAUTIFUL DAY HE HIT A MOTHER LODE OF THE PRECIOUS METAL.

HE DUG OUT SOME SIZABLE CHUNKS, HID THE MINE FROM OTHERS, AND SET OUT TO TOWN TO ENJOY HIS NEW FOUND WEALTH.

HE LIVED VERY WELL, FOR YEARS, ENJOYING HIS MONEY AND ALL HE COULD BUY, AND DO FOR OTHERS, WITH IT.

BUT SINCE HE DID NOT RETURN TO MINE FOR MORE GOLD, HIS WEALTH CONTINUED TO DIMINISH.

THEN ONE DAY THE MAN FOUND HIMSELF DESTITUTE, WITH NO WAY TO SUPPORT HIMSELF.

THE REALLY SAD THING WAS- DURING THE TIME BEFORE THIS HE HAD TO PAWN ALL HIS THINGS.

NEXT, HE HAD TO SELL HIS HOME, AND THEN HE SOUGHT THE CHARITY OF OTHERS.

HE NEEDED ASSISTANCE JUST TO GET ENOUGH TO EAT— EVEN THOUGH HE STILL OWNED THE GOLD MINE.

YES --HE HAD THE MINE, BUT FOR SOME UNEXPLAINABLE REASON HE FAILED TO RETURN TO IT AND REPLENISH HIS RESOURCES.

HOW SAD IT IS THAT HE BECAME A BEGGAR WHO NEEDED TO TAKE FROM OTHERS, INSTEAD OF GIVING TO THEM LIKE HE USED TO, BECAUSE HE FAILED TO RETURN TO HIS MINE.

THE PROBLEM IS NO LESS TRAGIC WHEN IT COMES TO FAILING TO USE THE SPIRITUAL BLESSINGS AND RESOURCES GOD OFFERS TO CHRIST'S FOLLOWERS.

THUS, THIS STORY LEADS US TO A QUESTION FOR OUR OWN LIVES, CONCERNING THE WEALTH OF SPIRITUAL RESOURCES AVAILABLE TO US.

AND THE QUESTION IS: "HAVE WE REPLENISHED OUR SPIRITUAL RESOURCES LATELY?"

THE FIRST STEP IN DOING THIS IS TO ENVISION THE HAND OF JESUS REACHING OUT TO US.

THEN WE NEED TO LISTEN TO HIS VOICE IN OUR MINDS SAYING: "COME AND SEE WHAT I WILL DO IF YOU CONTINUE TO FOLLOW ME."

HOWEVER, WE ARE THE ONES WHO MUST MAKE THE CHOICE TO FOLLOW OR NOT, BECAUSE GOD WILL NOT FORCE US.

MAY WE HAVE THE FAITH AND COURAGE TO CONTINUALLY SEEK THE WILL OF GOD, THE HAND OF JESUS OUR SAVIOR, AND THE GUIDANCE OF THE HOLY SPIRIT.

LET US PRAY: LORD JESUS, WE THANK YOU FOR YOUR INVITATION TO "COME AND SEE"- WHO YOU ARE AND HOW GREAT GOD'S LOVE FOR US IS. MAY WE BE OPEN TO FOLLOWING YOU DAY-BY-DAY. AND BY THE STUDY OF SCRIPTURE, THE PRACTICE OF OUR FAITH, AND THROUGH PRAYER THAT BRINGS THE HELP OF THE HOLY SPIRIT, MAY OUR EYES BE OPEN TO SEEING WHAT YOU CAN DO. AMEN

SERMON SUMMARY: PSALM 40:1-9 AND JOHN 1:29-42

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