

Sermon Note: This I Call to Mind

Sixth Sunday after Pentecost

Introduction

This week we continue a new sermon series inviting us to explore how we live open-heartedly in a risky world and at a contentious time. Many of us experience life as a tapestry, woven with threads of both sorrow and joy. In this week's text, we turn to the book of Lamentations.

The Book of Lamentations is a collection of poetic laments attributed to the prophet Jeremiah, mourning the destruction of Jerusalem and the Temple by the Babylonians in 586 BCE. It consists of five distinct poems or laments, each expressing deep sorrow and anguish over the devastation of the city, the suffering of its people, and the perceived abandonment by God. The poems reflect on themes of loss, mourning, guilt, and hopelessness, but also contain elements of repentance and a plea for God's mercy and restoration. The book is a poignant expression of grief and a reflection on the consequences of disobedience to God's covenant.

Lamentations 3:21-29 is a passage within the Book of Lamentations that shifts from lamentation to a message of hope and trust in God's faithfulness, even in the midst of great suffering and despair.

This week we will open our hearts to hope and call to mind the many ways God shows up in the midst of heartache. In this passage, Jeremiah hopes in the belief that God's compassion is renewed every day and that God's faithfulness is great.

Illustration Video

In the classic TV show, *The Golden Girls* Sophia Petrillo, portrayed by Estelle Getty, is an elderly Italian-American woman who hails from Brooklyn, New York. Despite her age and occasional health issues (including a stroke in earlier episodes), Sophia is known for her vitality, wit, and colorful personality. In this episode, "The Days and Nights of Sophia Petrillo", Sophia volunteers at a hospital and befriends a young man named Sam with a terminal illness. She gives him a nectarine but he refuses it, saying, "Sophia, it doesn't matter... once they goofed up my blood with that transfusion, there wasn't anything anyone could do. No one's ever beat it, Sophia." She responds, "But some day they will, and it could be tomorrow, and it could be you. I believe that, and you're gonna believe that. Because right now, today, that's all we got, hope!" Sam replies, "And a nectarine."

Watch the scene for yourself beginning at 2:18: <https://www.facebook.com/watch/?v=605575044290932>

Video Discussion Questions

1. How does the nectarine in this scene symbolize hope?
2. How can individuals and communities foster an environment of hope for each other? What are practical ways to support and uplift those who may be struggling with hopelessness?
3. In what ways can acts of kindness, encouragement, and shared experiences contribute to building and sustaining hope within families, friendships, churches, and wider social circles?

Lamentations 3: 21-29 (NRSVue)

“But this I call to mind,
and therefore I have hope:
The steadfast love of the Lord never ceases,
his mercies never come to an end;
they are new every morning;
great is your faithfulness.
“The Lord is my portion,” says my soul,
“therefore I will hope in him.”
The Lord is good to those who wait for him,
to the soul that seeks him.
It is good that one should wait quietly
for the salvation of the Lord.
It is good for one to bear
the yoke in youth,
to sit alone in silence
when the Lord has imposed it,
to put one’s mouth to the dust
(there may yet be hope)”

Scripture Discussion Questions

1. **Reflection on God’s Faithfulness:** According to verses 22-23, what aspects of God’s character provide hope and assurance during difficult times? How can reflecting on God’s steadfast love and mercy impact our perspective on challenging circumstances?
2. **The Discipline of Waiting:** In verses 25-26, Jeremiah talks about patiently waiting for God’s salvation and guidance. What are the challenges of waiting on God’s timing, and how does it strengthen our faith? How can we cultivate patience in seeking God’s will in our lives?
3. **Turning to God in Adversity:** Verses 27-29 describe the discipline and humility that come from bearing burdens and facing adversity. How does experiencing hardship shape our relationship with God? How can we encourage one another to turn to God for strength and guidance during difficult times?

Weekly Action

This week, take time to reflect on how God has been faithful in your life. Recall moments when God’s love and mercy have sustained you through challenges. Journaling or prayer can help you recognize and appreciate God’s faithfulness.

Prayer

“Lord, make me an instrument of your peace.
Where there is hatred, let me sow love;
where there is injury, pardon;
where there is doubt, faith;
where there is despair, hope;
where there is darkness, light;
where there is sadness, joy.”
- Prayer of St. Francis of Assisi