

Psalm 85:1 *For the music director; written by the Korahites, a psalm.*

O LORD, you showed favor to your land; you restored the well-being of Jacob.

² You pardoned the wrongdoing of your people; you forgave all their sin. (Selah)

³ You withdrew all your fury; you turned back from your raging anger.

⁴ Restore us, O God our deliverer! Do not be displeased with us!

⁵ Will you stay mad at us forever? Will you remain angry throughout future generations?

⁶ Will you not revive us once more? Then your people will rejoice in you!

⁷ O LORD, show us your loyal love! Bestow on us your deliverance!

⁸ I will listen to what God the LORD says. For he will make peace with his people, his faithful followers. Yet they must not return to their foolish ways.

⁹ Certainly his loyal followers will soon experience his deliverance; then his splendor will again appear in our land.

¹⁰ Loyal love and faithfulness meet; deliverance and peace greet each other with a kiss.

¹¹ Faithfulness grows from the ground, and deliverance looks down from the sky.

¹² Yes, the LORD will bestow his good blessings, and our land will yield its crops.

¹³ Deliverance goes before him, and prepares a pathway for him.

(RSV excerpts from: Is 5:18-25, Luke 21:29-38, 1 Thess 5:12-28)

Today, as we continue preparing to wrap our hearts and minds around the Incarnation - we hear the best news possible: God shows covenant love for us by reaching out to us again and again, in many ways and circumstances, to draw us into closer relationship. Our Psalm for today weaves together the other three texts to guide us along the way to renewal and revival for God's people. What could be more unexpected when times are uncertain than to be reminded that our hope and future are in Jesus Christ, who **is** the way?

In Isaiah we read some of the reasons that God understandably gets angry with us,

^{5:20} Woe to those who call evil good and good evil, who put darkness for light and light for darkness, who put bitter for sweet and sweet for bitter! ²¹ Woe to those who are wise in their own eyes, and shrewd in their own sight!

Today's Psalm expresses confidence that God will forgive and restore and deliver us, as the history of God's people shows. In the midst of end times discussions in Luke's Gospel, Jesus unexpectedly shows confidence in our common sense,

²⁹ And he told them a parable: "Look at the fig tree, and all the trees; ³⁰ as soon as they come out in leaf, you see for yourselves and know that the summer is already near. ³¹ So also, when you see these things taking place, you know that the kingdom of God is near.

Our Psalm anchors our wisdom in listening to God's word(s). In a chapter that begins eschatologically, the apostle Paul offers Trinitarian encouragement, but also shares practical advice:

²¹ but test everything; hold fast what is good, ²² abstain from every form of evil.

Our Psalm grounds us in God's timeless character and timely provision for our sanctification.

We love to wrestle with complexity, to unravel mystery, to clarify and codify all the "-ologies" – and there is a time and place for that. But sometimes we make things more difficult than they need to be. These passages make life unexpectedly simple in the midst of all the confusion around us. God expects us to have the wisdom to know the difference between good and evil. We seek the spiritual strength to choose light over darkness. We pray for the faith to trust God's covenant faithfulness in our journey. We can expect God to revive and renew us in unexpected ways.

Prayer:

Spirit of the living God, revive us again that we may rejoice in you! LORD, guide us in your way. Help us trust in your righteousness to bring us peace. In Jesus' name, amen.