

Lent Devotional April 10, 2020

Scripture

Lamentations 3:1-9, 19-33

1 I am one who has seen affliction under the rod of God's wrath; 2 he has driven and brought me into darkness without any light; 3 against me alone he turns his hand, again and again, all day long. 4 He has made my flesh and my skin waste away, and broken my bones; 5 he has besieged and enveloped me with bitterness and tribulation; 6 he has made me sit in darkness like the dead of long ago. 7 He has walled me about so that I cannot escape; he has put heavy chains on me; 8 though I call and cry for help, he shuts out my prayer; 9 he has blocked my ways with hewn stones, he has made my paths crooked. . . . 19 The thought of my affliction and my homelessness is wormwood and gall! 20 My soul continually thinks of it and is bowed down within me. 21 But this I call to mind, and therefore I have hope: 22 The steadfast love of the LORD never ceases, his mercies never come to an end; 23 they are new every morning; great is your faithfulness. 24 "The LORD is my portion," says my soul, "therefore I will hope in him." 25 The LORD is good to those who wait for him, to the soul that seeks him. 26 It is good that one should wait quietly for the salvation of the LORD. 27 It is good for one to bear the yoke in youth, 28 to sit alone in silence when the Lord has imposed it, 29 to put one's mouth to the dust (there may yet be hope), 30 to give one's cheek to the smiter, and be filled with insults. 31 For the Lord will not reject forever. 32 Although he causes grief, he will have compassion according to the abundance of his steadfast love; 33 for he does not willingly afflict or grieve anyone.

Devotional

The Rev. Kellie D. Wild '09, Creative Ministry (2019)

In my life I've known a number of people who have prayed for a miracle, and the request has been granted. The response is usually, "God is good." *God is good*, but I always wonder what the person's response would have been if God had chosen to answer the prayer differently. What if God had decided not to cure the cancer or heal the person's child? What would be the response then? I am cautious when responding to a wonderful healing that has taken place after ardent prayer, because there is usually someone close by for whom God did not answer the prayer for a loved one with a miraculous healing. I have had people ask me, "Why didn't God save my loved one? Didn't I pray hard enough?" Most of us know someone who prayed and prayed and prayed, yet God seemed silent.

I understand rejoicing in the wonderful healing power that God has and demonstrates. I also understand that for many faithful, God-loving people, life can be very hard. It can be easy to believe in God's grace and mercy in the good times, when we have an abundance of "stuff" and lots of love from family and friends. It can seem more difficult to believe in God's grace and mercy when we struggle just to find enough to eat or a place to sleep, or people we know and love have died, been killed, or suffered brutality. I work with people who seem to go from one struggle to the next, one tragedy to the next, feel alone or abandoned and, basically, that life is hard and then you die. And I see the pain and suffering they experience.

The book of Lamentations is hard for many people to read. Yet it is in this book that we hear of a faith in God's goodness and compassion and steadfast love based on who God is, not on what God has "done for me lately." The strength of our faith is demonstrated when life is hard, prayers seem unanswered, and God appears absent, yet still we *know* the abundance of God's steadfast love.

Prayer

God, help us to know that you do not forsake us, that your steadfast love, grace, and mercy are always present in our lives. Let us rejoice and say “*God is good*” even when to our prayer we do not get the answer we so desperately want. Amen.