

The Sixth Sunday After Pentecost

July 12, 2009

Amazing Grace Lutheran Church - Pastor Chip Wilke

Lamentations 3:22-33

Because of the Lord's great love we are not consumed, for his compassions never fail. They are new every morning; great is your faithfulness. I say to myself, "The LORD is my portion; therefore I will wait for him." The LORD is good to those whose hope is in him, to the one who seeks him; it is good to wait quietly for the salvation of the LORD. It is good for a man to bear the yoke while he is young. Let him sit alone in silence, for the LORD has laid it on him. Let him bury his face in the dust-- there may yet be hope. Let him offer his cheek to one who would strike him, and let him be filled with disgrace. For men are not cast off by the Lord forever. Though he brings grief, he will show compassion, so great is his unfailing love. For he does not willingly bring affliction or grief to the children of men. (NIV)

Traffic jams and doctor's offices are two things I really can not stand. Why? Because they make you wait. You have to just sit there and sit there and do nothing. I can't stand that. I am not very good at just waiting. Patience is one of those virtues for which I pray the Lord grants me more of each day.

Another thing that I personally struggle with is being quiet. I was one of those kids who was always getting shushed in the school's library. While we were on vacation Lisa let me know that I needed to be a little quieter at night while I played games or cards while our kids were trying to sleep. I think it is a Wilke thing that our voices tend to carry especially early in the morning or late at night. I also have tendency to talk a little too much at times and I've had to work at becoming a better listener.

Waiting and being quiet are two things that don't come that easy for me. That's why this text speaks directly to me. I pray it also speaks directly to you. The Lord tells us to wait. He tells us to do it quietly. The Lord encourages us to wait silently on Him no matter what the situation. Even in the midst of our greatest suffering the Lord teaches us through His Word this morning why we have every reason to: **Wait Quietly.**

In these verses the people of Israel are directed to the Lord's steadfast love. Jeremiah points them to God's Word and promises. They are told once again that the Lord is the only sure source of strength and hope. They are encouraged to wait quietly for the Lord's deliverance. Jeremiah writes: "***The LORD is good to those whose hope is in him, to the one who seeks him; it is good to wait quietly for the salvation of the LORD.***" But it is one thing to wait on the Lord when times are good and another thing to wait quietly when things are not so good.

Make no mistake things for God's people were not so good. You really have to read this whole book to catch the beauty of these verses. These verses right in the middle of this book stick out in stark contrast with all of the laments. This book which was called the *Tears of Jeremiah* and then took the name the *Laments of Jeremiah* and finally ended with the title we have today *Lamentations* is very true to it's name. The opening words get right to the point: "***How deserted lies the city, once so full of people!***" It is difficult to imagine a situation any worse than what the people of Judah and Jerusalem had just suffered. This once great nation had fallen. Babylon destroyed their city and

temple and carried most of the people off in a humiliating exile. The few left behind were so impoverished and suffering from famine that some even resorted to cannibalism. They had no visible resources or hope. They had sinned. They had sinned greatly. Now this proud nation had come falling down with a mighty crash. They had hit rock bottom and were unable to lift a finger to save themselves from this great tragedy. So Jeremiah tells the people to put their hope in the Lord and to wait quietly on Him.

Jeremiah makes several key points as he tells them to wait quietly. See if you can catch them. ***“It is good for a man to bear the yoke while he is young. Let him sit alone in silence, for the LORD has laid it on him. Let him bury his face in the dust--there may yet be hope. Let him offer his cheek to one who would strike him, and let him be filled with disgrace. For men are not cast off by the Lord forever. Though he brings grief, he will show compassion, so great is his unfailing love. For he does not willingly bring affliction or grief to the children of men.”***

Do you hear what Jeremiah asks of God’s people? ***“Let him sit alone in silence.”*** They are to suffer and to suffer without complaint. They may have to suffer alone. Even if everyone else turns away from the Lord you may have to sit alone and trust in God. ***“Let him bury his face in the dust.”*** The Oriental custom was to throw your face in the ground in the face of nobility. The Lord wants His people to be humbled - to show true humiliation. ***“Let him offer his cheek to one who would strike him, and let him be filled with disgrace.”*** If need be He even wants them to endure persecution and disgrace.

But did you notice why God rightly expects this of His people? Because this suffering comes from Him. The Lord laid it on them. No suffering can come into our lives unless the Lord allows it. But there is always a reason the Lord allows suffering in the lives of His people. It is for their good. ***“It is good for a man to bear the yoke while he is young.”*** The Lord does not allow suffering to make our lives miserable. He allows temporary suffering because He knows what is best for us. He does not want to lose us forever and so sometimes the Lord uses tough love. ***“Though he brings grief, he will show compassion, so great is his unfailing love. For he does not willingly bring affliction or grief to the children of men.”***

Think about times when Jeremiah might tell us to wait quietly for the Lord’s deliverance. As we await the results from some hospital tests. As our loved one suffers from some sickness. While we deal with family relationships that are torn and troubled and never seem to get any better. When we have a hurt that just won’t go away. At those times we might hear the Lord’s Word to wait quietly on Him. We are told to sit in silence - to be still and know that He is God. We are told to put our trust in Him and His unfailing love. We are to humble ourselves to whatever the Lord allows into our lives and trust in His wisdom.

That’s hard, isn’t it? I know that I have certainly not always been good at that kind of waiting either. I know I haven’t always been very quiet. I have grumbled and complained about far less. How about you? Are you good at just trusting that the Lord knows what He is doing in your life? Do you ever ask God “why” and get frustrated when you don’t get the answer? Do you ever lose patience in suffering? Do you ever get sick of waiting and sometimes get a bit loud with your grumbling and complaining? Who do we think we are to sin in this way? Who do we think we are to believe that God

owes us anything? We have not waited quietly for the Lord's salvation the way we should.

But, dear friends, there is one Person who did. There is the Righteous One who waited quietly and remained silent even before His persecutors. There is One who suffered quietly even as He endured the shame of the cross. There is One who really hit rock bottom as He suffered the wrath of God for all sin without ever giving up His trust in the Lord's deliverance. That person is our Savior Jesus who waited quietly in our place. That one is our Redeemer Jesus who paid our sin's price and suffered for all the times we refused to wait quietly. That One is Jesus who delivered us forever by smashing death and hell with His resurrection from the grave.

That is why my friends we can say: "***Because of the Lord's great love we are not consumed, for his compassions never fail. They are new every morning; great is your faithfulness.***" Every single day we have the Lord's steadfast love. We have His mercy each day like the morning dew. In Christ, the Lord forgives us all our sins day in and day out. He watches over us and has compassion on us. He remains faithful to us always. No matter what we suffer we are not consumed because we are His. One day we will be with Him forever.

The Lord knew what He was doing with Judah. He wanted to humble them and bring them back to Him. He took everything else away from them so that He was no longer the last resort, but the only resort. They needed to look to the Lord as their only source for strength and hope and salvation. They needed to trust in their God and His promises for them. In that total chaos they needed to look again to His unfailing love. Instead of making a longer list of laments they needed to wait quietly for the Lord's salvation.

As the Lord did for them, so He does for us. The Lord knows what is best for us. He will never give us more than we can bear. He wants us to turn to Him and His unfailing love every day. How can we do anything else when in love He has already made us His own? We have all we ever need because of Jesus. Now the Lord is our greatest possession. Now how can we say anything but, even in the midst of our greatest suffering: "***The LORD is my portion; therefore I will wait for him!***" The Lord's salvation - now that's something worth waiting quietly for! Amen.