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St. Paul's Lutheran Church
2100 16th Street SW
Austin, MN 55912-1749
Pastor Ted Barthels
Sermon preached on
July 4, 2021
6th Sunday after Pentecost

Scripture Lessons: 2 Corinthians 8:1-9,13-14, Mark 5:21-24a, 35-43

Hymns: 537; 428; 33; 50:1,2

Grace be unto you and peace from God our Father and our Lord and Savior Jesus Christ. Amen.

Sermon Text: Lamentations 3:22-26

²² *Through* the LORD's mercies we are not consumed,

Because His compassions fail not.

²³ *They are* new every morning;

Great is Your faithfulness.

²⁴ "The LORD is my portion," says my soul,

"Therefore I hope in Him!"

²⁵ The LORD is good to those who wait for Him,

To the soul *who* seeks Him.

²⁶ *It is* good that *one* should hope and wait quietly

For the salvation of the LORD. (NKJV)

This is the Word of God.

Sanctify us, oh Lord, through Your truth. Your Word is truth.
Amen.

In Christ Jesus, God our Savior, dear fellow Redeemed:

INTRO: The worst of times

There is a classic novel with an opening line that goes something like, "It was the best of times; it was the worst of times." It calls attention to the disparity of the wealthy from the poor and

downtrodden. When Jeremiah wrote this book of Lamentations it was the worst of times, and it was the worst of times. There was a great disparity in the land; it was a disparity between those who worshiped the Lord in truth, and those who lived in the wickedness of the times.

It was the worst of times for all because the very few who remained faithful to the Lord were suffering along with the wicked as Jerusalem was besieged by the Babylonians. Already many of the people of the Jews had been carried away into captivity or had suffered death at the hands of their enemies.

Jeremiah had suffered a great deal while calling for repentance, warning of the judgment that was about to befall the kingdom, and then was hard upon them. Instead of his warnings being heeded, Jeremiah was accused of treason for attempting to dishearten the people and he was thrown into prison. He suffered a great deal at the hands of the rulers of the nation. One might conclude that it was the worst of times in every way imaginable. So much idolatry, so much bloodshed, so much needless suffering.

All this led to the Holy Spirit inspiring Jeremiah's writing of this book, Lamentations. Yet in the middle of this book of sorrowful lament over sin and the suffering it brings we find the words of our text giving cause for --

THEME: Living with Joy in Our Hearts to the Lord.

This is possible for the child of God only because --

I. We Live Under the Lord's Mercy.

Our text begins --

Jeremiah 3:22-23 *"Through the LORD's mercies we are not consumed, Because His compassions fail not. ²³ They are new every morning; Great is Your faithfulness."*

The first point that we need to note is that Jeremiah did not claim favor with God because he was not as bad a sinner as those others who lived around him in Jerusalem, and throughout Judah.

Jeremiah didn't lament that this suffering he endured was unjust, that the Lord was being unfair with the judgment that was befalling all the people. Jeremiah made it clear that it was the Lord's mercy that made it so that all the nation was not consumed in the anger of the Lord. The Lord would have been just if He had rained fire and brimstone down upon Jerusalem and all the people of Judah just as He had done over a thousand years earlier with Sodom and Gomorrah. We are told that the wickedness of Jerusalem had surpassed that of the people that had lived in the land before the Children of Israel took possession of it. While they were suffering a great and terrible judgment, they were not consumed, a remnant would return to the land. God's promises to the patriarchs would be fulfilled. The Savior would come from the people of Judah who would be a blessing to all nations.

Why would the Lord preserve this people? The two reasons Jeremiah presents by inspiration are: that the Lord's compassions do not fail, they are new every morning; and, along with that, the greatness of the Lord's faithfulness. In this it is evident that Jeremiah recognized an important truth. Even among those few who were faithful to the Lord, it was not their own righteousness that delivered them from being consumed by the anger of the Lord, but rather the Lord's compassion. A second truth is equally astounding. While people are unfaithful, the Lord remains faithful to all His words and promises. This was Jeremiah's comfort indeed this was his hope and joy in the Lord.

So then, we need to understand this truth for our time, for our society, in our world, for ourselves, as the children of God in the 21st century. We need to understand that the reason we are not consumed, that our nation and, for that matter, the entire world has not yet been consumed is found in the Lord's mercy. We are living, the world continues to exist, in spite of the sin and wickedness in the world because the Lord's compassions for this wretched sinful race have not run out. His compassion for sinners continues. The Lord desires salvation for sinners, not destruction.

That leaves us with this fact, **sin is serious**. Willful sin is deadly serious! We are not to play down the seriousness of sin or of sin's consequences. We dare not think that the reason we are not consumed by the Lord is that we aren't really all that bad, or that

our sin is not taken seriously by God. The idea that we are pretty good as individuals, as Christians, and some might say as Christians living in a Christian nation is false. This is the delusion that infects most of mankind. We confess our sins, and with our confession we acknowledge that we deserve nothing but punishment. **Nothing** but punishment!

We are living under the mercy of God. His compassions are new every morning. That is a wonder of grace. Each and every day I sin, and so do we all. We covet, we worry, we get angry or frustrated, and in our anger or frustration we sin; we think evil against our neighbor. We fail to love our neighbor as ourselves. We fail to love and serve the Lord who saved us with all our heart and all our minds and all our strength. If our life isn't totally dedicated to the Lord, then we are not faithful and true.

But **God is faithful**. He has promised life and salvation through the merits of His Son, our Lord Jesus who died for us and rose again. **God is faithful** and watches out for us in all our ways. He cares for us as His own special people whom He redeemed, whom He called to faith. He watches out for us in all our ways. **His mercies are new every morning**. All this is according to grace, according to His steadfast love which endures forever.

Jeremiah didn't just resign himself to the fate that is befalling Jerusalem. Jeremiah didn't despair. He lived in hope! From Jeremiah' hope in the Lord we also learn so that --

II. We Hope in Him.

Lamentations 3: 24-26 “The LORD *is* my portion,” says my soul, “Therefore I hope in Him!”²⁵ The LORD *is* good to those who wait for Him, To the soul *who* seeks Him.²⁶ *It is good that one should hope and wait quietly For the salvation of the LORD.*

What do these words of Jeremiah mean, “*The Lord is my portion?*” When all earthly things are taken away, including not only money and goods, and one's home, but the lives of one's loved ones, when the future looks extremely bleak, the natural human response is to cry out, “I've lost everything!” For the child of God who understands that the Lord's compassions do not fail, that His mercy, His steadfast love endures forever there is hope! The child

of God says, “My portion, my inheritance, my riches are with the Lord.”

Jeremiah understood that the Lord had stored up for him “*treasures in heaven, where neither moth nor rust destroys and where thieves do not break in and steal.*”²¹ *For where your treasure is, there your heart will be also.*” (Matthew 6:20-21) Those words taken from Jesus’ sermon on the Mount sum up the hope that lived in Jeremiah’s heart so many centuries before Jesus was born. That was the portion Jeremiah comprehended by faith in the words and promises of God.

Since Jeremiah was convinced of God’s faithfulness, Jeremiah hoped in the Lord. He didn’t have the false hopes of being saved by the forces of another nation. He didn’t have the false hope of possible escape. He knew his future rested with the Lord, and the goodness of the Lord. Jeremiah confessed that the Lord is good to those who seek Him by faith. Jeremiah knew that it is the right path of life to wait quietly for the Lord. He will deliver.

The message for us is so powerful. We see our nation falling ever deeper in moral corruption and evil. It is tempting for us to put our trust in the politicians. It is tempting to think that if the right people get elected our future as a people, as a nation, as children of God will be more secure. There is no doubt that good government is a blessing from the Lord, but even the best government cannot deliver us from sin and death.

As for the long term, what was true for Judah is true for every nation under heaven. In Judah a good and faithful king would often be followed by an evil and unfaithful king. That is the way it is in the world. The psalmist warned, “*Do not put your trust in princes, Nor in a son of man, in whom there is no help.*” or salvation (Psalm 146:3) In another psalm we read, “*Our help is in the name of the Lord, Who made heaven and earth.*” (Psalm 124:8) Jeremiah understood this, and his words encourage waiting, trusting that the Lord will deliver in His time, in His way. That may be a temporal deliverance in this life. It may be and ultimately will be our eternal deliverance to the mansions of heaven glory.

Remember that Jeremiah hoped in the salvation of the Lord! By faith Jeremiah understood the wonders of God's mercy and compassion, that these were proclaimed in the promises of salvation in the Messiah who would come into the world. Jeremiah knew that the Lord would save a remnant of Judah, and that they would be returned to Judah, and restored, and that the promises of God would be fulfilled. He also understood that it would not happen all in a day, or even in his lifetime. And yet Jeremiah exhorts others to find their hope in the Lord just as He did.

Again, consider the words of the psalmist. *“O Israel, hope in the Lord; For with the Lord there is mercy, And with Him is abundant redemption. ⁸ And He shall redeem Israel From all his iniquities.* (Psalm 130:7-8) We wait and hope in the Lord for the same reason and with the same expectation of Jeremiah. By faith we understand that our portion, our inheritance is with the Lord. Paul wrote in his epistle to the Romans, *“The Spirit Himself bears witness with our spirit that we are children of God, ¹⁷ and if children, then heirs—heirs of God and joint heirs with Christ, if indeed we suffer with Him, that we may also be glorified together.* (Romans 8:16-18) By faith we understand that we can wait quietly, that is without being unduly agitated and upset, for the Lord. We can be quietly assured that He will deliver us because there is abundant redemption. We have been redeemed from all our sins, ALL our sins, have been forgiven by His grace through the redemption that is in Christ Jesus! (Romans 3:24) That is the foundation of our hope, and so we know that we have an inheritance in heaven and yes, we will suffer here with Jesus, but we shall also be glorified together with the Lord. *“And thus we shall always be with the Lord!”*

(1 Thessalonians 4:17)

So, we watch the news. We hear a lot of bad news. Murder rates are up all around the country. People around the world are suffering greatly from the pandemic. Others are suffering because of war, and still others, a good many others suffer quietly for Jesus' sake. We look around us in the world, and the evil that is being promoted as good should disgust us, but the devil even wears down the Christians in this world, so we find that we are no longer shocked or disgusted by the filth of sin that fills the world.

While we thank the Lord that we have been spared much of the sufferings in this world, it is not because we are better than they are, that is better than those sinners of this world. Only Jesus makes us clean! We live under the mercies of God, we live with our hope in our Savior. We live knowing the salvation that is stored up for us in heaven. In spite of all that may happen in our lives, all that is going on in the world we have this hope. As a result of this hope of life and salvation, we are blessed to live with joy in our hearts to the Lord!

AMEN.

“Now may the God of hope fill you with all joy and peace in believing, that you may abound in hope by the power of the Holy Spirit.” Amen. (Romans15:13)