



Series: B-sides

Sermon: The Other Side

Exodus 14:30-31,15:20-21

Thus the Lord saved Israel that day from the Egyptians; and Israel saw the Egyptians dead on the sea-shore. Israel saw the great work that the Lord did against the Egyptians. So the people feared the Lord and believed in the Lord and in his servant Moses.

Then the prophet Miriam, [Moses' and] Aaron's sister, took a tambourine in her hand; and all the women went out after her with tambourines and with dancing. And Miriam sang to them: "Sing to the Lord, for he has triumphed gloriously; horse and rider he has thrown into the sea."

Monday: Read Psalm 34

The psalmist gives thanks for the ways in which God has been a mighty deliverer. The words of verse 8 are familiar. But what does it mean to "taste and see" the goodness of the Lord? The word translated as "taste," means "to try something by experiencing it." The psalmist admonishes us to try God's goodness for ourselves and experience it as one would taste a new food. Tasting is one of our five senses. Seeing is another. We can see the goodness of God powerfully displayed in the created world. Remember that in Genesis 1, after each creative act, God "saw" that it was good. And at the end of the creation story, God saw that creation was not just good, but that it was "very good." Psalm 34 encourages us to experience God for ourselves and to open our eyes and see the goodness of God that is all around us. In what ways have you experienced God's deliverance and/or goodness in the past week? How might you use your senses to be more in tune with God's work in your life?

Prayer: Having delivered me from my fears, may I take my refuge in you, O Lord. Amen.

Tuesday: 2 Chronicles 5:2-14

The Bible holds many songs. The shortest song in the Bible is found in 2 Chronicles 5:13. It is only seven words in Hebrew; translated into English as, “For he is good, for his steadfast love endures forever.” All the people sang a song of praise to the Lord, with instruments, as they dedicated the Temple to God. Too many people confuse “good” singing as only those who can “sing in tune” or “harmonize”. A long-time teacher of sacred music once steadfastly stated, “I can teach anybody to sing, but only God can inspire ‘good’ singing - singing with the Spirit.” I imagine the whole assembly at the Temple singing with the Spirit - worshiping and praising God with gusto without a care about who was in tune or harmonizing. They were all in tune with God! That’s good singing! How do you approach singing to God in worship? Do you hold back? Or do you sing with gusto? With the Spirit? How might your voice be used to sing God’s praises?

Prayer: Lord, inspire me to sing with the Spirit! Amen.

Wednesday: Read John 10:1-10

Jesus expresses his mission in ministry so clearly at the end of this passage: “I came that they may have life and have it abundantly.” In contrast to all that would rob us of life - the thieves and bandits he mentions - Jesus comes to give, not just life, but life in abundance. Not just survival, but flourishing; not just getting by, but thriving; not just existence, but joy. Jesus offers more life than most of us imagine possible. Isn’t this marvelous news? In Christ we are freed from survival and existing - and delivered into thriving and abundant joy. Perhaps abundant life looks different for different people in different stages of life. For the blind man (in John 9) it is sight. For the single parent it might be companionship and help. For the bullied teen it might be acceptance and an advocate. For the impoverished neighborhood it might be dignity and the chance of self-determination. For the retiree, it might be involvement in a worthwhile cause. What is it that robs you from living fully? What does abundant life look like for you right now? How might you follow Jesus’ voice into abundant life?

Prayer: Good Shepherd, call me by name and lead me into abundant life. Amen.

Thursday: Read Psalm 103

Psalm 103 is classified as an Individual Hymn of Thanksgiving, a psalm in which a single voice praises God for God’s goodness to or on behalf of that individual, usually for deliverance from some trying situation. Hermann Gunkel describes hymns of thanksgiving in this way: “A person is saved out of great distress, and now with grateful heart sings a thank offering to Yahweh.” An Individual Hymn of Thanksgiving generally contains the following elements: (1) an Introduction, in which the psalmist declares the intention of giving thanks and praising God; (2) a Narrative, in which the psalmist tells what has happened that has prompted the words of praise; and (3) a Conclusion, in which the psalm-

ist praises God for all that God has done on the psalmist’s behalf. In what ways has God’s goodness been evident in your life lately? From what trying situation has God delivered you? Use the formula to write your own psalm to God today.

Prayer: O God, I sing praises to you for the ways in which you have delivered me. Amen

Friday: Read Luke 4: 14-21

“Today this scripture has been fulfilled in your hearing.” Today-not tomorrow or someday-but today. I wonder if life would change, not just for me but for the world, if one day at a time, today our individual and collective energies were directed to that for which Jesus gave his life: Bringing good news to the poor. Proclaiming release to the captive. Bringing sight and renewed vision where darkness has prevailed for far too long. Letting the oppressed go free. Releasing from debt those whose redemption never seemed possible. I wonder what would happen if we were to remember today that the Gospel delivers us into new life. I wonder how things would change if we simply tacked the word "today" to the front of our mission statement. As Jesus did. And then lived like it was so. What difference would it make in your faith journey if you simply substituted "today" for "tomorrow" or “someday”? What would it mean to you today to embrace Jesus’ mission as your own? What would it mean for our congregation? For our community?

Prayer: Set your holy urgency within us today for the mission of the gospel, that it may deliver us into new life. Amen.

Saturday: Read Romans 8: 31-39

Paul draws this section of his letter to the Romans into a resounding doxology of praise to the sovereignty of God in Christ. We are more than conquerors through the God who has loved us with an eternal love. In this Paul is convinced, and assures us, that "neither death, nor life, nor angels, nor rulers, nor things present, nor things to come, nor powers, nor height, nor depth, nor anything else in all creation, will be able to separate us from the love of God in Christ Jesus our Lord.” The passage does not pretend that we won’t face difficulties, trials, times of trouble. Paul certainly knows that the life of faith is not immune to hard times. What is comforting in this beloved passage is the reassurance that God will be with us in hard times. God will bring us, finally, like Christ, through our trials, to the other side - to new life. Have you been able to recognize God’s presence with you as you faced hard times? In what ways is it comforting to know that nothing can separate you from the love of God?

Prayer: Where can I go to flee from your presence? Nowhere! Thanks be to God. Amen.