

Cross Keys United Methodist Church

2017 Lenten Devotional

Week 3

Monday, March 13

Lamentations 2:13

What example can I give you? What parallel can I show you, people of Jerusalem? What comparison can I make that will comfort you, beloved people of Zion? Your wounds are as deep as the sea. Who can heal you? Lamentations 2:13

The wound caused by sin is unfathomable! How do you feel when someone you have no feeling for says something bad about you or belittles you because they have a better way? You probably could not care less, right? How about someone you do know to some extent? Well, you may not like it, but that's life, right? Now, what about if it was a good friend? Is the pain starting to get bad yet? Well then, how about a family member; and I am not talking about a long lost cousin, but a beloved close family member, like your mother? Ouch! That would be extremely bad, wouldn't it?

It would appear that the more you love a person, the more vulnerable you are to them, and the more you can be hurt by them. Perhaps you have heard the old axiom, "you hurt the one's you love." Well, of course, because who cares what they say, if you do not love that person. You might simply say, "take a hike" or "be gone with you" or some other not so pleasant thing. So, the more love between you the more pain, or the bigger the wound. So far we are on the same page, right?

Ok, here comes the twist. Who is the author and inventor of love? Who is love? Yes, God! What is the one thing we all do to belittle God? Sin is the only thing that can 'hurt' Him. God, who is love, who loves

us more than anything, who gave His son's earthly life for us, is wounded in the heart by our sin. Since God's love is immeasurable, the wound caused by our sin is unfathomable!

Jerry Furniss

Tuesday, March 14

Deuteronomy 28:15-63

All these curses will come on you. They will pursue you and overtake you until you are destroyed, because you did not obey the Lord your God and observe the commands and decrees he gave you. Deuteronomy 28:41

The news, lately, is full of weather related catastrophes, terror attacks, human trafficking, political posturing, and dire predictions of famine to come. You may ask yourself where is God in all of this? God is still there, where He has always been. And we are still here, disobedient as we have always been.

Why are we surprised by the state of our world? Here in Deuteronomy we were told the outcome of our disobedience. Deuteronomy was written at the time of the first covenant between Israel and God. Israel needed to obey the law. All of it. To the letter. Impossible. We live under the new covenant—a new creation—washed by the blood of Christ Jesus. Obedience under the new covenant requires only that we accept Jesus as our Lord and Savior and surrender our lives to Him.

If it is really so easy, then why is our world such a mess? Because we don't like to surrender anything, do we? Every moment

seems so important. Every insult so major. Every hurt so painful. Every loss so tragic. Well I've got news for you—they are all of that. But only for a blink of an eye from an eternal perspective. God's got this. He has you and yours.

Remember this—we are VICTORS in Christ Jesus. The only action we need to take is to surrender on our knees in prayer and praise to the one true God.

Wednesday, March 15 Deuteronomy 29:1-6

"You ate no bread and drank no wine or other fermented drink. I did this so that you might know that I am the Lord your God." Deuteronomy 29:6

Being able to be called a Child of God is a tremendous privilege. We have an ever present father who will always be with us, guide us and watch over us. Sometimes though, we can fall into the trap of becoming self-sufficient, or even wayward. As our father, God will always bring us back to the point of where we realize who it is that we must depend on; Him and Him alone. He will accept nothing less from us because he desires nothing less for us. In Deuteronomy 28, we are reminded of the consequences of disobedience. Deuteronomy 29:1-6 discusses the other side of God's dealings with His wayward children. The point where He brings us to the "Aha!" moment where we understand what He has gone to great lengths to tell us. In verse one we learn that this point is made as a renewed covenant between God and the Israelites that were given at Horeb. God reminds them that although they experienced great distress (verse three), they still came through because He provided for them (verse five). He brings them full circle when He reveals the true lesson he was trying to impart—that they

might recognize and know that He is God, on whom they should solely depend.

As we prepare for Easter, may our hearts always be grateful for the grace God offers us as we engage in the process of learning to depend more fully on Him.

Louise Dillon

Thursday, March 16 Isaiah 19:19-22

When they cry out to the Lord because of their oppressors, he will send them a savior and defender, and he will rescue them. Isaiah 19:20b

In Chapter 19 of Isaiah, the nation of Egypt is judged by God. God strikes them for actions against God's chosen people and they are judged for what they have done. But, in verse 16, Isaiah talks of conversion. Five cities in Egypt begin to worship God, and God forgives them and heals them; striking and healing. Scholars debate these passages because some see them as historical while others see them as not yet being fulfilled. In my opinion, the detailed events described have not been precisely fulfilled as other prophetic passages from Isaiah. John MacArthur believes these events will take place during the second coming of Christ.

Yet this passage is fascinating. God will send them a Savior who will defend and deliver them. God will act on their behalf as he did with God's people. Yet they needed to be disciplined, "just as a parent disciplines a child for the purposes of improvement." (John MacArthur) This is a pretty good illustration of Lent.

God has sent a Savior, God seeks to defend and deliver us. Yet sin is a part of our lives, so we need to repent of our sin and seek our Savior. Historically, Lent began as a time of fasting and prayer, teaching new

converts to Christianity. These new Church members would be baptized on the day Jesus rose from the dead (Easter). Over the centuries, Lent became more penitential, as believers would consider their sins, repenting and seeking forgiveness to be made whole “for the purposes of improvement”.

How about you? Is there room for improvement? Do you have the deep relationship with Jesus that you truly want? Consider then the historical discipline of Lent. Confess your sin, repent, seek forgiveness through prayer and fasting, and turn to Jesus, our Savior and Lord.

John Reidy

Friday, March 17

Psalm 60

You have shown your people desperate times; you have given us wine that makes us stagger. But for those who fear you, you have raised a banner to be unfurled against the bow. Psalm 60:3-4.

We live in one of the most privileged times and places known to man. Due to the technological advances of the 20th and 21st centuries, we can get to pretty much any place in the world within a couple of days of air and land travel. We can see and talk to anyone almost anywhere in the world via the internet and telephone through skype, facetime, video conferencing, etc. Any type of food is generally available. We can watch sports, political events, and even giraffes giving birth in “real time” live from our living rooms—you get the picture. The result---we tend to take everything, including and especially God, for granted. Yet, when *desperate times* strike, often who is the first to be blamed—you guessed it, God. But, did he *cause* our strife? No, He gave us the choice –we can follow His will

for us or choose to do what we want, ignoring Him. When we follow our own choice, we are responsible for that consequence.

Nevertheless, despite all of our bad choices and ignorant ways, God is always there for us. Indeed, this is the beauty of the cross. Jesus bore all of our sin so that we may have salvation. It is there for the taking—all we need to do is believe and truly seek to make Him a relevant part of our lives. And for those who do recognize the salvation God has offered us, as the psalmist says, He has “*raised a banner to be unfurled against the bow.*” In other words, He will provide the relief from our troubles; He will be our protector; and He will deliver us from those desperate times.

Dawn Jennings

Saturday, March 18

Acts 3:1-11

He jumped to his feet and began to walk. Then he went with them into the temple courts, walking and jumping, and praising God. Acts 3:8

This is a great story about faith, prayers and miracles. People of faith must be sure of what we hope for and certain of what we do not see. Peter and John had so much love for God that they were given healing power from Jesus Christ our Lord and Savior. There is nothing more beautiful than being at our services at Cross Keys church when I am overwhelmed with the Holy Spirit racing in my heart and feeling Gods’ power. God’s power is omnipresent, all powerful, and all knowing. He is everywhere and loves us. He just wants us to get closer to Him and to heal us from our sins.

Chuck Newsom