

Message for June 24, 2018

“The Sweetness of Remembering”

Lamentations 3:22-26 NIV 1282

22 Because of the Lord’s great love we are not consumed,
for his compassions never fail.

23 They are new every morning;
great is your faithfulness.

24 I say to myself, “The Lord is my portion;
therefore I will wait for him.”

25 The Lord is good to those whose hope is in him,
to the one who seeks him;

26 it is good to wait quietly
for the salvation of the Lord.

Prayer:

1. Welcome everyone
2. We have come today to remember many of our loved ones, friends and members who have died, and we have come to celebrate their lives by installing bricks in the Pleasant Grove UMC Memorial garden. This will be a time of the sweetness of remembrance complete with the nostalgia of the past and a time of celebrating the lives in the light of the Resurrection of Jesus.
3. I think that we all will admit that life is not as secure as we would want it to be. To me, the stresses of living in today’s society is increasing my anxiety about the future. I bet that many of you are having the same feelings.
- 4. SLOW**
5. Back when we graduated from school, we realized that we would have to work for a living. When we work we also know that we could lose our job!
 - a. When we seem secure in our job we have a tendency to not plan our spending, especially when we are young. Hence, we can get into financial trouble. Our financial debts can easily overwhelm us.
 - b. When we get out of debt we find that our bodies fail us because of the long hours of overtime we had to do to get out of debt, to keep our job, to get the things we want in life.

- c. And before we ever arrive at the place in life when we have everything we want, we die. ---
- d. Think about it!

6. Our life is like a house. At first everything is new.

- 7. Very little repairs are needed.
 - a. Then things begin to look worn.
 - b. So, we paint, we re-carpet, we update.
 - c. Then things began to break down. We decide to upgrade and get a better, newer, more advanced stove, refrigerator, microwave, tile, roof, window, siding. And the list goes on. Then there are termites. And a leak in the roof. And the flooring begins to creak and sag.
 - d. And suddenly it seems we are spending more on repairs than the house originally cost.

8. The only difference between a house and us is we cannot move into a new body like we can a new house. At least, not just yet.

9. As the Apostle Paul writes in 2 Corinthians --- our bodies are like a tent --- and a tent has limited protection from the elements --- our tents wear out.

10. What do we do? How can we respond to the continued decrease functionality of our bodies? This is a good question.

11. Let's see what today's Scripture text from the book of Lamentations has to say to us.

22 Because of the Lord's great love we are not consumed, for his compassions never fail.

23 They are new every morning; great is your faithfulness.

24 I say to myself, "The Lord is my portion; therefore, I will wait for him."

25 The Lord is good to those whose hope is in him, to the one who seeks him;

26 it is good to wait quietly for the salvation of the Lord.

12. Some background: In 600BC, because of the decaying influence of sin, Judah and Jerusalem and the Temple fall to the Babylonians (present day Syria)

- a. Instead of repairing their relationship with God, Israel tried to make friends with Egypt.
- b. It was a disastrous failure.
- c. The result was the Babylonian Captivity.
- d. The book of Lamentations is a book of sorrow. Because of their sins, Babylon has finally destroyed the nation of Judah, the city of Jerusalem and the Temple.

13. In all of Jeremiah's laments recorded in this book, **and today's Scripture is the only passage of confidence.**
14. Israel's world came tumbling down and just as it was with Humpty Dumpty, sin prevented them from restoring themselves to what they once were. (Sound familiar, doesn't it?)
- Instead of power, there was slavery.
 - Instead of rejoicing in God there was sorrow in sin.
 - Instead of peace, there was suffering.
 - And in the midst of this world of judgment there are people like Jeremiah who did not participate in Jerusalem's sins.
15. Yet Jeremiah's world came tumbling down and in it, Jeremiah discovers a great truth:
- Suffering does not mean we are forsaken by God.**
 - Many times, we think that our suffering is a result of God's judgement on us.**
 - I do not believe that.**
 - The Lamentations passages states that God's love for us continues regardless.**
16. We may ask, where in Scripture do I get this **confidence that God gives the mercies which are tailor-made to carry us through today's trouble?**
17. I get it from (among other places) Lamentations 3:22–23, *"The Lord's loving kindnesses indeed never cease, for His compassions never fail. They are new every morning; great is Thy faithfulness."*
18. It's the phrase "they are new every morning" that gives me this great confidence that each day's mercies—each day's kindnesses—each day's grace are given specifically for that day.
- Ponder that with me. Let it sink in. **"God's mercies . . . are new every morning."**
19. Why are they new every morning? Why does God do it that way? It's not because yesterday's mercies were bad or weak. It's because they were yesterday's. Yesterday's mercies were designed for yesterday's burdens.
20. Today's mercies are for today's burdens. They are new every morning. They are like the manna in the wilderness: you can't keep it overnight. Enough comes for each day. You live on God day by day, or you don't live on God.
21. Do you remember the refrain from the hymn that was just sung? "Great is thy faithfulness" – ***Great is thy faithfulness! Great is thy faithfulness! Morning by***

morning new mercies I see; all I have needed thy hand hath provided; great is thy faithfulness, Lord unto me!

22. This truth will save our life again and again, if we grasp it and live it. Because how many times in life do we come to the end of our resources and say: there isn't anything in here anymore. I am depleted. One more straw and this camel's back will break. And we despair that tomorrow will just be rolled on to today's depleted condition.
- a. And at that moment we desperately need this truth: God will not expect you to carry one more straw with these present mercies.
 - b. When the next straw is added, the mercies will be new.
23. So, we must not compound today's load with fretting over tomorrow's. We must not doubt God and say, "I have no more strength; so tomorrow will be impossible to live." That's not true. You will not be asked to live tomorrow on today's strength. What you need today is not tomorrow's strength, but today's faith that tomorrow's mercies will be new and will be enough.
24. And there's something different between the experience of faith for tomorrow's power, and the actual experience of that power itself.
- a. Our faith stands on the promise of God **and waits and hopes in weakness and peace.**
 - b. And, of course, that waiting and hoping is part of today's mercy.
 - c. Part of today's mercy is the ability to trust that there will be sufficient mercy for tomorrow.
25. But in spite of all the peace that faith can bring about today, it is not yet tomorrow's mercy or tomorrow's power. There's a difference. And that's why there is such a battle that goes on. We want the feeling of adequacy today for what we will have to go through tomorrow.
- 26. But God says, Trust me. I will give it to you when you need it.**
27. All of us here have been through very difficult times. Just look at the names in our bulletin – people that we have known and loved. People who we have worked with, disagreed with, sang hymns with, had meals with, prayed with --- and now they are in the grave.
28. As we look over the cemetery that surrounds us – we see the graves of many people that we remember – family names, neighbors names and even strangers that we do not know.
29. Our church stands on the faith shoulders of the people buried in the cemetery and the future people in this church will stand on the shoulders of us.

30. New each morning, we will feel God's enduring grace to help us, mold us, shape us. God's grace will eventually give us a sense of peace which will replace the pain of the moment – will replace the sense of hopelessness for the future.
31. Yes, we will look back and remember – our loved ones – we may have been angry with them – we may not even have said that we loved them – But God's mercies help to heal our attitudes. Slow but certain.
32. Explain what we are going to do next:
- a. Gilbert Benson,
 - b. Vernon Bolte,
 - c. Bea King,
 - d. Barbara Donohue,
 - e. Doris and Bob Kirkland,
 - f. Fred Lauterbach,
 - g. David Osborn,
 - h. Joe Tracey
 - i. Paul Warren – read Ruth's poem
33. Prayer