

Psalm 85:8-13

Sermon August 13th

We Can Make a Difference!

We see throughout the biblical story that when we act in hurtful ways, we don't only hurt our loved ones, our community, and ourselves. We also hurt the land we walk on.

God's whole creation is impacted by our actions. We hear this message being proclaimed over and over again throughout the biblical story. From the words of Moses, to the words of the prophets, to the sayings in the wisdom literature. Even in the gospels, and the letters of the epistles, Jesus and the apostles remind us of how our actions impact everyone and everything around us.

Similarly, as we reflect on storm Sunday, I think of a storm like a tornado or a hurricane or a torrential rainfall that leads to flooding, and how it to, impacts everyone and everything in its path

In 1987, I lived through one of the most terrifying tornados ever to hit an urban center in Canada. Our house lied less than one km west from the damage path. There was debris all over the street. One of the houses on our block was destroyed from a blast of wind. This storm killed 27 people, injured hundreds of others, killed and wounded many animals, damaged farmland, trees, destroyed many homes and commercial property. It impacted everyone and everything along it's almost 40 km damage path .

This storm showed Canadians just how powerful nature can be, as well as, the grave impact nature can have on all of God's creation when it is all out of sorts.

Unfortunately, as the climate changes, we are seeing more and more of these intense storms. Like the EF 4 tornado we witnessed earlier this summer near Didsbury, or the several tornados we have seen in the Ottawa valley, or the torrential rainfall that led to flooding in Nova Scotia. It is safe to say that nature is definitely feeling out of sorts these days.

So, storms impact everyone and everything around it when nature is all out of sorts, and we also impact everyone and everything around us when we are all out of sorts.

Well, in our psalm, we see that this can work in reverse. When God restores us, when we are no longer out of sorts, the land is restored as well. Bearing much fruit, much crop.

Or another way of looking at this, is when we act in life-giving ways toward each other, and towards the land, then we will have a positive impact on the land. We will be part of God's healing and restoration of the land.

When we look back on the storm theme, there is the moment when we are standing in the midst of the storm, praying that somehow, we will make it through. Then there is the moment directly after the storm has passed where we assess all the damage that has happened around us, and to us). And then there is the moment where everyone comes together as community, and helps people get back on their feet again. Helps with the clean up, and the rebuild.

Edmonton's slogan the city of champions didn't come from their sports teams, though in the 80s the sports teams lived up to the hype. This slogan was coined in the aftermath of the tornado, when the city council saw how so many people came together to help one another through this tragic ordeal.

We can make a difference. We can act in ways that will help heal and restore the earth). We can act in ways that will help heal and restore each other.

This is the hope we find in the biblical story. Though, we hear in this story that sometimes our actions have a negative impact on everyone and everything around us. There are also many parts of this story where we see that our life-giving actions can have a positive impact on everyone and everything around us. We see this throughout the gospels when Jesus heals the sick, proclaims good news to the poor, shows hospitality to the marginalized peoples in his community. Or, in the Old Testament, one common saying we hear is when we do something hurtful, we see consequences to the fifth generation, but when we do something life-giving, we see positive impacts to the thousandth generation. So, our life-giving actions can go a lot further than our hurtful actions in impacting everything and everyone around us.

We can make a difference. No matter how bad it seems, no matter how harsh the conditions are, no matter how big the damage path is. We can make a difference.

And so, as we hear from our Psalmist today, God will restore us, God will restore the land through us. May we find hope in this promise.

Let us pray, gracious God, as we stand in the midst of the damage paths of our lives, whether from natural storms that hit us or from the metaphorical storms we cause through our hurtful actions, help us believe that you will restore us. That you will transform our hurtful actions into life-giving actions, healing our relationships with one another, as well as, with the land. **Amen.**