

Sermon December 2nd, 2018

God's Redemption for Our World

When watching or reading the news daily, it doesn't take long for us to see that everything in our world is hurting. Whether it is the physical world we live in or the animals that live with us. Whether it is the global economic dysfunction that has some analysts predicting a depression like the 30s in our near future or the growing political polarity that has led to a rise in violent conflict. Whether it is the breakdown of meaningful human relationships or the discrimination so many people face. Whether it is the impact of diseases like cancer or the impact of mental health problems like depression and anxiety. All of God's creation is hurting.

Last week, I along with a Muslim and Hindu representative were asked if our world is in crisis at a formal dialogue in North Calgary. We all said yes without hesitation. More and more global leaders are acknowledging this crisis and are trying to figure out ways on how we can deal with this crisis.

Many of us global citizens in our day to day lives are trying to figure out how to live in this world of prolonged suffering? How to deal with this crisis we find ourselves in? Wrestling with questions like: What actions do we take to relieve the suffering of our physical world? What actions do we take to create a more stable economic environment? What actions do we take to encourage dialogue? What actions do we take to inspire forgiveness and reconciliation? What actions do we take to breakdown the ignorance that leads to discrimination? What actions do we take to deal with physical and mental health problems? We are all trying to figure out how to live in a world that is in crisis?

In our gospel this morning, we see that the early followers of Jesus experience a similar crisis. Their whole world is hurting. Natural disasters, wars, famine, uprisings, disease are impacting their lives everyday.

In the midst of this crisis the disciples too are trying to figure out how they are going to live in this world? What actions do they need to take to deal with this crisis?

Jesus hears their struggle. Jesus hears our struggle. And in response to our questions, Jesus encourages us to believe in the gospel. The gospel that states that through Jesus' life, death, and resurrection, God's kingdom

has and continues to impact our world. That as we face suffering living in a world in crisis we also experience healing and redemption in Christ Jesus.

Jesus encourages us to stay faithful to the gospel, persevering and imitating Christ in our daily lives. Reflecting God's kingdom come in the lives of the people we encounter. In the lives of all creation.

Jesus encourages us to hope in his promise that even though we live in a world in crisis now one day Jesus will come again and make everything right. Suffering will be no more. All of creation will be redeemed.

So, the disciples cling to Jesus' words and actions, believing, trusting, hoping, and continuing the work that Jesus did. Proclaiming the good news of Jesus' life, death, and resurrection. Revealing God's healing and redemption to people hurting in a world in crisis.

Like the disciples, we too, cling to Jesus' words and actions. Believing, trusting, hoping and continuing the work that Jesus did.

Today we begin our Advent season. The season where we reflect on the state of our world and the promise that one day Jesus will come again to breathe God's redemption and healing into our lives and into the life of all of creation. Today, we revisit what it means to be a follower of Jesus living in these times. Today, we remember Martin Luther's words, "If I knew the world ended tomorrow. I would plant a tree."

Today we hear Jesus' invitation to us. "Lift your heads up in the midst of this suffering world and hope in God's promise of redemption."

Today we hear Jesus' challenge to us. "Keep living out your faith. Keep revealing God's healing and redemption. Keep planting tree after tree until the day when I will make everything right."

Our hope in God's redemption moves us to act. Moves us to shine a little light in our world. To show people that even though our world is in crisis, God's healing and redemption are at work giving us hope for a brighter future.

Inspiring us to care for our physical world. Inspiring us to create an economic environment that is fair and stable. Inspiring us to respect others by having honest respectable conversations with those who share diverse views from us. Inspiring us to forgive others building bridges towards

reconciliation. Inspiring us to educate people to help curb ignorance in our world. Inspiring us to pray and invest in research with the hopes of creating better awareness and healing practices to help us deal with physical and mental health problems.

In our own denominational body, the ELCIC, we continue to live out our faith in a world in crisis. Creating opportunities for churches to practice environmental stewardship. Encouraging ecumenical and interfaith dialogue. Working with indigenous people and refugees to establish opportunities for forgiveness and reconciliation. Creating studies to help educate people on the diversity of people in our world.

Within the Alberta Synod we are working with Alberta Health to create more awareness about mental health problems in our congregations.

We Lutherans are not without our issues, but are doing what we can as a Lutheran Christian body in Canada to reflect God's hands and feet in a hurting world. Trying to persevere. Trying to keep planting even though some days we are really impacted by our hurting world.

And so, Advent is a season that invites us to cling to the hope that one day Jesus will return redeeming all of God's creation. And Advent is a season that challenges us to keep living, keep planting, keep being God's hands and feet in the world until this day comes.

Let us pray, loving God, give us the strength to endure these times of crisis in our world. Give us hope in your promise that one day your whole creation will experience redemption and healing. And as we wait for this day, help us continue to live out our faith in the world. Giving people moments of what's to come in fullness. In Jesus name we pray, **Amen.**