

Isaiah 2:1-5

Psalm 122

Romans 13:11-14

Matthew 24:36-44

## Sermon November 27<sup>th</sup> 2022

### *God Our Redeemer*

In our gospel this morning, the people are tired. Exhausted. As they are being overtaxed. Mistreated. Oppressed. Impoverished. Excluded from their communities due to their labels. The people who are choosing to follow Jesus are ready for change. They have spent their entire lives longing for the messiah to come and liberate them from their suffering (**Image One:** Someone suffering).

And now Jesus is here. There is hope that this change is coming. People are experiencing moments that reflect these changing times. Moments where they are experiencing God's healing and redemption (**Image Two:** Someone experiencing healing). The crowds are getting bigger and bigger as Jesus travels across Galilee sharing the good news that God's reign is here. That God's healing and redemption are here.

Well sort of. It's here, but not yet in its entirety. People are experiencing moments of God's reign in their lives, moments of God's healing and redemption (**Image Two**). But they are still subject to the authorities. They are still experiencing abuses.

This is why it is so hard for Jesus' followers to understand what Jesus is saying here. Jesus is here now. Why will he have to go away, and then come back again at a later unknown date to make everything right? Why can't he just make everything right now?

Well, for Jesus, he will not go against everything he stands for and use violence in challenging the authorities. Unfortunately, his nonviolent challenge to the authorities will be met with harsh judgment. Not hospitality. Jesus will suffer and die for his protest (**Image One**). Jesus can foresee this coming.

Those who follow Jesus will eventually see this scene played out. It will challenge their very faith as does this message they are hearing from Jesus in the now. They don't know if they can hang on, and hope in Jesus' promise that one day God will make everything right. Especially, if they have to keep waiting and waiting and waiting.

We can relate to the followers of Jesus here. When our lives are not going the way we hoped, we too, long for change. We too, long to see God's promise of healing and redemption being fulfilled in our lives (**Image Two**). In its entirety. We too, can get frustrated and confused when we have to wait and wait and wait.

It is hard to stay hopeful in God's promises. It is hard to keep believing when we keep suffering (**Image One**).

For example, you are tired of feeling so lonely all the time. You are approaching the big 30, and still haven't met the person you want to spend the rest of your life with. Every summer, your schedule is filled with weddings as you see your friends celebrating their love with their significant others. While you still wait to meet yours. You want to be happy for them, but the loneliness you feel is overshadowing this happiness. Instead, you find yourself feeling envious, and maybe even a little resentful. Which then leads to feelings of guilt.

Your friends keep trying to reassure you to believe that you will meet that person one day. But, in this moment, it feels like a million years away. In this moment you struggle to keep hoping in God's promise that one day you will heal from this loneliness. You will meet someone. Or you will find fulfillment in the relationships you currently have. With friends. With family.

When our lives are not going the way we plan, it is hard to stay hopeful in God's promises. It is hard to keep believing (**Image One**).

Or, it has been five years since your spouse passed away. And yet, you are still really struggling with your grief. It feels like you only parted yesterday. You have trouble getting out of bed. You spend hours a day looking at their picture. Listening to old songs you used to dance to together. You find yourself shedding a lot of tears. Your friends, your children, your siblings try to reassure you that you won't feel this way forever. There is still so much to live for.

But, in this moment of prolonged grief, you struggle to keep hoping in God's promise that one day you will heal from this grief. You will experience redemption from your suffering.

When our lives are not going the way we plan, it is hard to stay hopeful in God's promises. It is hard to keep believing (**Image One**).

Or, you are struggling with a chronic mental or physical health issue. You have been to many doctors and/or psychologists to try and find a cure for your health concern. But you are still struggling with the pain, the rejection, the isolation that comes with having a chronic mental or physical health problem. Your loved ones encourage you to stay hopeful as maybe the next treatment option will be the one that finally gives you some relief.

But in this moment of immense suffering, you are struggling to stay hopeful that God will heal you. Will redeem you from this mental or physical health problem. Or at least give you better days where you can cope with the ailments that come with this problem.

When our lives are not going the way we plan, it is hard to stay hopeful in God's promises. It is hard to keep believing (**Image One**).

Well, in our gospel this morning, Jesus is right there with our loved ones, encouraging us to keep hoping, to keep believing. Hang in there. Because you will experience God's healing and redemption in its entirety (**Image Two**). Eventually.

And though this message doesn't sink in right away for the disciples. In their witness of the resurrected Christ, in their reception of the Holy Spirit, they feel rejuvenated in their faith, and carry this message to the persecuted church. Encouraging them to keep hoping. To keep believing. Jesus will return, and make everything right.

For centuries, we as the church have continued to proclaim this message to our suffering communities.

During Advent, we more intentionally turn our attention to this promise that Jesus will return again to make everything right. That one day we will experience God's healing and redemption in our lives and in our world in its entirety (**Image Two**).

During Advent, we more intentionally encourage one another to keep hoping in this promise. To keep believing. Which for Jesus means to keep living out this good news. To let this hope, this promise shape our actions towards others.

Because when we keep believing. When we pay special attention to where God is at work in our lives and in our world healing and redeeming us. When we are a healing and redeeming presence to others. We see that God has not abandoned us in our time of suffering. God is very much present. God is at work in us and through us. We don't experience this work in its entirety. But we do have moments where we have been touched by God's healing and redeeming love (**Image Two**).

Whether it is not feeling so lonely, because a close friend walks with you in your feelings of loneliness. Listening to your lament. Helping you find meaning in other relationships.

Or, after waiting and waiting, you do meet someone.

Either way, you start to feel God's healing and redemption touching your life (**Image Two**).

Whether it is reconnecting to your purpose as a grandparent, or through a volunteer opportunity, reconnecting to your calling to help others. Whether it is finding meaning in new friendships, or reconnecting to hobbies you were unable to make time for in the past.

Of course, this doesn't take the whole sting of grief away, but it helps you keep living in the midst of your grief. It gives you moments of newfound happiness. You start to feel Gods' healing and redemption touching your life (**Image Two**).

Whether it is finding a treatment that is helping you cope with and/or treat your health issues or being with a loved one that sits with you, helping you find some happiness in the midst of your pain. Either way, you start to feel God's healing and redemption touching your life (**Image Two**).

For the early followers of Jesus, they experience these moments of God's healing and redemption through the hospitality, generosity, and support they offer one another. They experience these moments of Gods' healing and redemption when they keep believing (**Image Two**). They keep living out the gospel.

Like the early followers of Jesus, we too experience these moments of God's healing and redemption through the hospitality, generosity, and support we offer one another. We experience God's healing and redemption when we keep believing (**Image Two**). When we keep living out the gospel.

Let us pray, gracious God, open our eyes to see where you are at work in our lives and in our world to heal us. To redeem us. Give us patience to stay hopeful, to keep believing in the midst of our suffering. And may we all one day experience your healing and redemption in its entirety. In Jesus name we pray. **Amen.**

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