

Sunday Morning Worship at Brentwood – Feb 21, 2016

Second Sunday in Lent

Notes for the sermon on Sources of Desolation

Luke 13:31-35 – Sermon Text = Luke 13:35b

**And I tell you, you will not see me
until the time comes when you say,
“Blessed is the one who comes in the name of the Lord.”
(Luke 4:1-2a)**

[Hymns = 624, 640, 374]

Key focus = two sources of desolation in our lives are depression and death – being confronted with these ‘states of soul’ makes us feel alone and hopeless – but One has already come, with companionship and hope, to bless our suffering and accompany us through it to new levels of flourishing



An Admission

- Doing something this morning that would have disgusted my professor of preaching, Charlie Hay – preaching ‘off’ the text rather than ‘from’ the text – what I have to say is related to the text’s broad meaning, but not a careful mining of this text in its context
- Jesus is grieving over the desolation of Jerusalem – the ‘malfunctions’ (cf Miroslav Volf) of Judaism in light of his prophetic insights into what God really invites his people to be and do
- Desolation comes from cutting ourselves off from God – our source of flourishing

Sermon notes of Rev Dr Brian Fraser,
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The Sources of Desolation Noticed this Week – Death & Depression

- Chuck Lee, Tony Plomp, Les McKinnon, and Kate Bowler – all have outlived the predictions of their passage to the next phase of life – living with death to a degree that I, at least, have not experienced – facing it with realism, courage, and calm – Kate Bowler talks about surrendering all to God – accept our human fragility and finitude – stare down our deaths and be filled with “dread and wonder” - where are they finding their source of strength and hope in the midst of this desolation? – in the blessing that comes from the One who comes in the name of the Lord – in the name of God’s eternal love - from their relationship with God in Jesus Christ through the life-giving energy of the Holy Spirit – a humble confidence in the blessing with which God surrounds them
- Three others in particular – won’t name them – poignant and powerful descriptions of living in the grip of depression – the American author William Styron wrote about his depressions in *Darkness Visible* – here’s one of the ways he described depression – like “lying bound hand and foot at the bottom of a deep dark well utterly hopeless” – completely debilitated – deprived of any feeling of human connection or capability – in these kinds of desolation, where does one find hope? – perhaps that the wrong way of looking at it – better frame as how does hope find us? – depression has debilitated us – drained us of all capacity – thrown us completely on the grace of God, though we can’t even recognize its presence – but the blessing that surrounds us at all times and in all places works it quiet natural wonders to revive hope and move us through and beyond this bout of depression – we are blessed, even though we can’t feel it, by the One who comes in the name of the Lord – in the name of God’s eternal love

The Bottom Line – God is With Us Always

- The bottom line in this text, whatever the desolations we face, is that God’s eternal love will overcome them – because we are God’s, in Christ, through the energizing work of the Holy Spirit, we will flourish through depression and death – it doesn’t always, or often, seem that way – but it is
- It does involve surrendering all our false senses of security, acceptance, and power to God – waiting, however impatiently, for God to act in God’s time – seeing that the suffering of our desolation is the Spirit leading us to a deeper appreciation of our hope in God’s eternal love
- With Jesus, in the desolation of the crucifixion, deserted by his disciples and feeling the agonies of death on the cross, we cry our lament from Ps 22 – “My God, my God, why have you forsaken me?” – and surrender with the same breath to the mysterious but merciful ways of God – “But your will, not mine.”