

Minister's Message 4-22-2020

Hello everyone! This is Pastor Melinda from Shiloh UCC. Each week I have been sharing an extra meditation midweek with you from one of our scripture readings for the upcoming Sunday. The reading this week comes from Psalm 116 which many scholars call a “Thanksgiving Psalm.”¹

The Psalmist praises God for deliverance. We know this because the Psalm praises God and gives thanks for freeing him from suffering. We don't know exactly what the psalmist needed deliverance from. The historical context of this Psalm is lost to us. But we do know that God listened to his prayers and helped him. This is how psalms of thanksgiving are born (other examples would be Psalms 30, 32, and 34).

I love Psalm 116 because it reminds me that God listens to our prayers. I love Psalm 116 because it reminds me to be grateful and pray even after the hard times are over. I can't tell you how many times I forgot to say “Thank you” to God after God helped me through some trouble. I think a lot of people are like this. While I was going through problems (health or other type) I was praying like a little angel promising everything to try to please God.

But when God solved my problem, I sometimes forgot to thank God. I started to get “lazy” spiritually. I started praying and focusing on God's presence less. It's a common pattern among spiritual people.

Why am I telling you all this? Because we are all sinners. We are all imperfect. Don't be too hard on yourself when you make a mistake. Even ministers sin. Even ministers need to be reminded to be humble and grateful.

As we are going through this scary “Coronavirus era”- however long that will be – consciously pay attention to your prayer life. Now is not the time to be lazy. While you are praying “in fear and trembling” remind yourself to be grateful when all of this is over.

¹ http://www.workingpreacher.org/preaching.aspx?commentary_id=1184
Commentary on Psalm 116:1-2, 12-19 by Jerome Creach

It's hard to imagine it right now, but there will be a time when the virus will be just a faint memory. It will be a part of the past. There will be a time when we won't be afraid anymore. We will not have to wash our hands every 5 minutes till they are bloody and dry, because God will save us from this pandemic just as God has always saved us in the past. Do not worry. We will find a cure, a vaccine, or an alternate therapy like Coronaplasma. You can rest and leave your worry in the hands of God. God is stronger than the Coronavirus.

I don't know when that time will be, but I know it's coming. Maybe not right away, but soon. Whenever that time comes, and we will be free to hug and kiss again, (and maybe even go to a jazz concert!), but right now, let's remember the prayers we said when we were in distress.

Let's be grateful and joyful before God. Let's pray with our whole hearts and praise our amazing and holy God. Let's be authentic Christians who have faith before their deliverance. Let's be calm disciples that read Psalms like Psalm 116 that help us pray and praise.

Psalm 116:1-4, 12-19

1 I love the LORD, because he has heard my voice and my supplications.

2 Because he inclined his ear to me, therefore I will call on him as long as I live.

3 The snares of death encompassed me; the pangs of Sheol laid hold on me; I suffered distress and anguish. 4 Then I called on the name of the LORD: "O LORD, I pray, save my life!"

12 What shall I return to the LORD for all his bounty to me?

13 I will lift up the cup of salvation and call on the name of the LORD,

14 I will pay my vows to the LORD in the presence of all his people.

15 Precious in the sight of the LORD is the death of his faithful ones.

16 O LORD, I am your servant; I am your servant, the child of your serving girl. You have loosed my bonds.

17 I will offer to you a thanksgiving sacrifice and call on the name of the LORD.

18 I will pay my vows to the LORD in the presence of all his people,

19 in the courts of the house of the LORD, in your midst, O Jerusalem. Praise the LORD!

Pastoral Prayer

Let us pray!

Glorious God, to You we run when our house is “on fire.” When we have problems, when we are worried, we remember that you are the only one who can really help, and so we run to you.

But really where can we run? Is there somewhere where you are not? Where can we go to escape your infinite love?

We know you love us and hear our prayers, that’s why we continue to send so many to you. However, Psalm 116 teaches us to remember you even in the good times – and good times will come. It teaches us to be grateful and humble before you. It teaches us to praise your name even when we feel like everything’s all right.

Right now, we are not living in that perfect future yet. We are afraid and full of anxiety. We hear about illness and death on the News every day. Right now, we bring all this mess to you. Our fears, our tears, our families, our church family, everything.

Now we intercede for everyone who needs your special attention. We pray for those who are ill, especially those who have Coronavirus. We also pray for those who are suffering in body, mind or spirit. Send the comfort of your Holy Spirit to those who are grieving. Be with the people who are working during these locked up times. Keep them safe and healthy, so they may enjoy being with their families for a long time. Thank you for listening to our prayers.

We pray all this in the name of our Resurrected Lord, Jesus Christ, who taught us to pray:

The Lord’s Prayer

Our Father...

Hymn: “I Surrender All”

Thank you for listening. Tomorrow, Thursday morning at 10:00 AM come and chat with me on the Google site that we will e-mail out to you.

Benediction: And now, go in peace and may the peace of God fill your hearts always. Amen.