

Weekly Message from Pastor Pook for February 12, 2021

Good morning, it's February 12th. We are going to read from the Treasury of Daily Prayer, one of the Psalms, as well as a poem called *The Weaver, The Master Weaver, The Tapestry*. It's called by many different names. It's attributed to many different people. I wasn't able to really discern which one was the true author and which ones had just quoted it. But the two of them are working together in my mind to talk about a message that came up on Sunday. Sunday, we were talking in our GriefShare program, about the why. Why did God cause my loved one to die? Or why did God have to take my loved one? And it's all about the idea that God needed this person or that person to die, or that it was part of some grand scheme of God's, that all the good and the bad that happens to you are all part of God's plan. And it just struck me that what is needed in these circumstances is an understanding of the grace and mercy of God. Bad things happen to good people and bad people alike. Actually, if we're honest with ourselves, all of us are evil and fallen short of the glory of God, as we say in our confession. So it's not really that bad things happen to good people, it's the bad things happen to sinful people, which is all of us. And only by the grace of God does anything good happen to any of us, whether we be believers or not. It's only by His grace. And so we give Him all the glory for the good and we lay claim to all the evil in ourselves. That's not an easy thing to do. It's not comforting. It's not comfortable. But it is comforting to know that God has wiped it clean in His blood and we are free.

So let's get into what we're talking about and I'll try and explain a little bit more what I've been thinking. The Psalm is Psalm 147, selected verses, 1-3 and then 6-11.

¹ Praise the LORD! For it is good to sing praises to our God;
for it is pleasant,^[a] and a song of praise is fitting.

² The LORD builds up Jerusalem;
he gathers the outcasts of Israel.

³ He heals the brokenhearted
and binds up their wounds.

⁶ The LORD lifts up the humble;
he casts the wicked to the ground.

⁷ Sing to the LORD with thanksgiving;
make melody to our God on the lyre!

⁸ He covers the heavens with clouds;
he prepares rain for the earth;
he makes grass grow on the hills.

⁹ He gives to the beasts their food,
and to the young ravens that cry.

¹⁰ His delight is not in the strength of the horse,
nor his pleasure in the legs of a man,

¹¹ but the LORD takes pleasure in those who fear him,
in those who hope in his steadfast love.

Really great Psalm talking about how God binds us up and cares for us and heals our wounds, and is worthy to sing praise. He gives rain to the earth. He makes the grass grow. He gives food to the beasts and the birds. And He protects us and gives His steadfast love to us.

Now, the poem that was read on this past GriefShare on Sunday, trying to talk about the question of why:

My life is but a weaving
Between my Lord and me,
I cannot choose the colors
He worketh steadily.

Oft times He weaveth sorrow
And I in foolish pride
Forget He sees the upper
And I, the underside.

Not till the loom is silent
And the shuttles cease to fly
Shall God unroll the canvas
And explain the reason why.

The dark threads are as needful
In the Weaver's skillful hand
As the threads of gold and silver
In the pattern He has planned.

Now that, or some variation of that, is given to, like I said, authorship to many people. It's a good poem, to a degree, but it needs to be understood properly because it can come with an understanding that God chooses the colors, He chooses the pain and the sorrow for me, and that's part of His plan. The plan of God was for us to live in the garden of Eden forever, naked and free from guilt or shame. All good, all good, all golden, all glorious and light threads of life. When He ended on the sixth day, He said, "It is very good," and then He rested from His labors.

So it's important for us to understand that the dark threads of our lives, the sorrows and the hardships and the angst and the death and the suffering that we face, those were not part of God's plan. Humanity brought the dark threads of life into existence when we chose to eat the fruit. When Adam and Eve ate the fruit, they brought the dark threads of fear and shame and death and loneliness and everything else, separation from God, and all that comes with it. They brought the dark threads in their lives. And now ever since then there have been dark threads in our lives. Some of them, of our own making. We can all look back on our lives and think of the things that we've done, that we're not proud of. Things that we would consider sinful and evil. And those black threads are fully us. We brought them into our lives and we have to deal with the consequences of those actions.

But there are also dark threads that have come into our lives that have nothing to do with anything that we've said or done or thought. It's just dark threads that have come into existence because we live in a fallen and sinful world. The world itself is groaning with the pains of childbirth, waiting for the deliverance from sin. Not only did our sin curse us as human beings, it cursed the ground, it cursed everything that is in existence. And so now God created this perfect world, this perfect cosmos, and

it's breaking down. It's falling apart because sin has infected every aspect of not just our lives, but of the entire cosmos.

So, dark threads that are woven in through our lives are not necessary and are not part of God's plan. It wasn't God's plan that you get cancer or that your sister dies or that your child dies. That's not part of God's plan. God's plan is that we live for eternity with Him. But since we have sinned and fallen from His plan and brought the dark threads into our lives, God redeems those dark threads, He grabs those dark threads, the evil and the sin and the sorrow that is in our life, and He repurposes them. And so they can be redeemed. They can be used for His glory and for our good.

And so it's not that God had to have these evil things happen, these bad things happen in our lives. That is not the case. And so when we understand that God, as the skillful weaver, takes the dark and He makes it into a beautiful picture, and a strengthening of our faith, He can use our pain and our sorrow for us to turn to Him. Again, not that He desires us to live in pain and sorrow, but because we experience it, He then says, "Let me take that and redeem it and let it be something useful for you." It would be better if we did not have to go through it, but this side of God's return, we will have to go through these things.

So it just made me think about the key component of our relationship with God is what this last sentence of the Psalm said. "But the Lord takes pleasure in those who fear Him, in those who hope in His steadfast love." Now, it's interesting, fear and love go together. And Luther picked that up when he wrote all of his definitions to the commandments in his small catechism. "We should fear and love God so that," and whatever the commandment might say. So here we have that right here in Scripture, "He takes pleasure in those who fear Him and those who hope in His steadfast love." So the fear of God leads to hope in His steadfast love. That's not often how we use the word fear. But in the context of God, the fear of God is the respect and the honor and the awe that God is almighty, and for some reason, He loves us out of His great compassion. Because we are His creatures. Because He created us. He loves us. And for no other reason, not for anything that we've done or said or think, or the potential that we have, none of that. He loves us because we are His creation and He wants His creation to be in fellowship with Him. He wants His creation to love Him and to turn to Him in times of trouble and distress. He wants us to know that He has the power to handle anything that comes our way and He will provide for us.

Go in peace and serve the Lord. Thanks be to God.