

THE LORD'S COMPASSION HAS NOT COME TO AN END
Sermon for the 5th Sunday after Pentecost, 2021
Lamentations 3:22-33

The grace of the Lord Jesus Christ, and the love of God, and the fellowship of the Holy Spirit be with you all. Amen.

The text for our sermon today is our First Reading read before, Lamentations 3:22-33: ²² **It is because of the LORD's mercies that we have not been completely cut off. For His compassion has not come to an end.**

²³ **It is new every morning. Your faithfulness is great.**

²⁴ **I have been saying to myself, "The LORD is my portion. Therefore I shall put my hope in Him."**

²⁵ **The LORD is good to those who wait for Him, to the person who seeks Him.**

²⁶ **It is good that one hopes, even in silence, for the salvation of the LORD.**

²⁷ **It is good for a person to carry a yoke while he is young.**

²⁸ **He should sit alone and keep silent. For the LORD has laid it on him.**

²⁹ **He should put his mouth in the dust. Perhaps there is hope.**

³⁰ **He should offer his cheek to the one who strikes him, and he should receive plenty of insults.**

³¹ **For the Lord will not reject for ever.**

³² **However, if He has caused grief, He will show compassion, because His mercies are very great.**

³³ **For He has not taken pleasure in tormenting human beings or in oppressing them.**

Lord God, heavenly Father, sanctify us through Your truth, Your Word is truth. Amen.

Dear friends in Christ,

The saying is true: "Life was never meant to be easy." There are literally thousands of times I am sure when we can all relate to these words. Life can be tough, and not always exactly what we want. No matter how hard we try, something always goes wrong, and when it does, we feel like giving up. Even in our relationships with others, we often find we cannot please everyone. In fact, while pleasing one, you will often offend the other. It's a vicious circle.

Even in the Christian church, there is a struggle, and we are not talking about the constant battle with the devil, the world, and our sinful flesh, who all work together to disrupt and pollute the church with false doctrine. No, there is also the struggle to keep those who for now are in our membership and also to build it up. Apart from trying to keep within its walls those who already have membership, we all want to see the church grow, and so we want to be active in letting our light shine in the outside world. We want more and more to come and join with us in sitting at the feet of Jesus, learning and being served by Him. We want to be found actively planting the seed and asking the Lord to cause the growth. How wonderful it would be to find our church busting at the seams! While we are all for seeing the church grow, often we do not see any results, and so we shrug our shoulders and wonder, "*What's the point?*"

The reason we feel this way is because of *sin*. Sin causes us to worry and to doubt, to "throw in the towel" and continue to live unsatisfied lives within and without the church. Others don't respond to us - or our circumstances - the way that seems only reasonable to us. So we give it our best, and it is never quite good enough, or when we achieve what we set out to do, it is no longer satisfying, and so we stretch toward the next goal in search of that elusive thing called satisfaction, or success, or happiness, or whatever. Sometimes it is minor, and we can ignore it for a while, but it always comes home to roost. Sometimes it is striking and painful and cannot be ignored. But in every case, it is the consequence of the imperfect nature of man and the imperfection our failings bring to the world around us.

The pain we feel is called "the cross." Like the cross of Jesus, it comes on account of sin - not necessarily specific sins, but on account of our shortcomings and our failure to be perfect and holy. That is what sin is - to fall short of the mark. At times, we are tempted to give up, as we feel crushed and defeated by the difficulties of life, and at times we are tempted to think that God is punishing us, that our troubles are God's response to our sins. That is one of the reasons it is so painful when a sermon speaks the Law of God too clearly, and we feel personally attacked and personally offended. How much lower can we fall!

This is how Jeremiah and his fellow Jews were feeling. The words that the apostle Paul would later speak about himself and his fellow apostles apply well to the condition of Jeremiah and the handful of believers who remained after the fall of Jerusalem. He said, "*In every way we are hard-pressed but not crushed. We are perplexed but not in despair. We are persecuted but not forsaken. We are struck down but not destroyed*" (2 Corinthians 4:8-9). They thought they could fall no lower. They had no visible resources, either from within or from without. The whole world had declared them a loss. They were thrown back upon their one last resource - in truth, their first and only resource - the LORD. At the very centre of his lament, Jeremiah broke out of the gloom by turning his attention to the character of the LORD, whose word he had come to know and whose person he had learned to trust.

Speaking to us through Jeremiah, the LORD reminds us that in the midst of gloom and temptation to despair, we can be comforted by the promise that He will have compassion.

Jeremiah begins by speaking of the goodness of the Lord. He says, **“It is because of the LORD’s mercies that we have not been completely cut off. For His compassion has not come to an end.”** ²³ **It is new every morning. Your faithfulness is great.”** That is the point at which we must begin. We must begin with the knowledge and the certainty that the LORD is good. **“His compassion has not come to an end.”**

Because of the LORD’s great love, Jeremiah’s people would survive. The LORD’s loyal love, which first made them His people, would keep them and protect them. By an oath and a promise, the LORD had separated them from all other nations. Purely by grace, He had called them to belong to Him. Because of His promise to Abraham, Isaac, and Jacob, He had rescued them from Egypt. Because of that same promise, He had kept them through 40 years of wandering in the wilderness. Because of that same promise, He had loved them down to the very end, always trying to reach them with the Word that would change their hearts and lead them to appreciate how much He cared for them.

That same love is for us too. Just remember, every morning, when you wake up, there is air to breathe. You have water to drink and food to eat. You have clothing and shelter. Of course, as you grow older, you get slower or feel a few more aches and pains, and sometimes the human body begins to lose some of its abilities. At some point in life everyone gets sick, and eventually, everyone will die - but consider the wonder of your body! David, pondering such a thing was compelled to write: *“For You have acquired my inmost parts. You shaped me in my mother’s womb. I praise You, because I have been fearfully and wonderfully made”*, (Psalm 139:13-14).

We could go on for hours just about the wonders of the body - and then there is the world around us and the universe. In His Word, God tells us that it has all been created for us and for our blessings. **“His compassion has not come to an end.”** ²³ **It is new every morning.”** Every day is filled with the LORD’s goodness to us. That is why Jeremiah cries out, **“Your faithfulness is great.”** And chief among God’s goodness to us is the LORD’s only Son, Jesus Christ! The LORD has given His only Son into death for our sins. The Father sentenced His Son to die on the cross that we may be forgiven. Then He raised Him from the grave on Easter to show us irrefutably that our sins have been forgiven, paid for completely, punished to the last of the wrath of God against sin. He is Risen! Our sins have been paid for. We have been forgiven. Redeemed by the blood of the very Son of God! It is finished! He loves us with a love that transcends any full comprehension! No wonder Jeremiah could say, **“I have been saying to myself, “The LORD is my portion. Therefore I shall put my hope in Him.””**

All this is true, so why do things keep going wrong? Why do we get sick? Why do we have trouble with others? Why is life so painful and difficult and frustrating at times? Three times the word **“good”** is mentioned, and each time it is used in the sense that suffering with difficulties etc., is a good thing. Why? It is good because, through all our troubles, God strengthens us and purifies us. He disciplines us.¹ Every child who is loved by his Father is disciplined by Him. God also demonstrates for us in the New Testament how our patient and faithful endurance in times of persecution and pain witnesses so clearly and effectively to those who see our patience and observe our faith and faithfulness while we are in the midst of suffering.

Jeremiah continues, ²⁵ **The LORD is good to those who wait for Him, to the person who seeks Him.** ²⁶ **It is good that one hopes, even in silence, for the salvation of the LORD.** ²⁷ **It is good for a person to carry a yoke while he is young.** ²⁸ **He should sit alone and keep silent. For the LORD has laid it on him.** ²⁹ **He should put his mouth in the dust. Perhaps there is hope.** ³⁰ **He should offer his cheek to the one who strikes him, and he should receive plenty of insults.”** We cannot understand how every event in our lives is good, but God can, and He tells us that it is good. Certainly, God is not a liar. As Paul writes, *“Let God be true, and “every man a liar”* (Rom. 3:4), so we dare not bring ourselves to call God a liar, so the only thing we can do is to accept that even the things we do not like are for good and that God is with us. That is the present, day-to-day value of having faith in Jesus Christ! In that brief part of our text, Jeremiah reminds us that one of the values of our tribulations is that they lead us to pray. He writes, **“He should put his mouth in the dust. Perhaps there is hope.”** Putting your mouth in the dust is an ancient form of humility and worship and the posture of humble prayer.

“I have been saying to myself, “The LORD is my portion. Therefore I shall put my hope in Him.” That is the true answer! I trust in God. My hope is in Him. **“Because the Lord is my Portion, therefore I have hope!”** Why? **“For the Lord will not reject for ever.”**

The LORD takes no **“pleasure in tormenting human beings or in oppressing them,”** meaning that God has no desire to see us suffer or have troubles. No, everything He does is for our good and our blessing, and the good of our neighbour. He blesses with every event, whether we find that event or those circumstances happy or sorrowful. His plan is always for our welfare and blessing, so even when it is necessary to permit us to suffer pain or sorrow or temptation, He will have compassion! He will

¹ Proverbs 3:11-12; Hebrews 12:1-12

rescue us from our troubles and bring us out of sorrow and bless us. When He causes grief, **“He will show compassion, because His mercies are very great.”**

Another way to say it is to ask the question: “What is the will of God for us?” The answer: *Our salvation*. If we believe in God, then we shall want to keep that truth uppermost in our minds. If we believe in God - that is, if we trust in Him, then we shall know that no matter what it feels like at the moment, the LORD will have compassion. **“The LORD is my portion. Therefore I shall put my hope in Him.”** The Apostle Paul put this same thought somewhat differently. He said in Romans 8:17-18, *“If [we are God’s] children, [we are] heirs also, heirs of God and fellow heirs with Christ, if indeed we suffer with Him in order that we may also be glorified with Him. For I consider that the sufferings of this present time are not worthy to be compared with the glory that is to be revealed to us.”* In every situation, Paul finds that whatever we endure will prove to be well worth it, and more! When we arrive at eternal life in glory, we shall ourselves discover and judge that we would gladly have borne more if we had clearly seen and understood how wonderful all that God has prepared for us really is!

This is the message this morning. The Lord’s **“compassion has not come to an end.”** It is a message that is repeated countless times in Scripture, and it bears repeating because as we endure the moment of pain, trouble, or sorrow, it is so easy to lose track of the true will of God for us and the truth that He will have compassion! Yes, life often hurts, and we suffer pain and endure frustrations and sorrows. But in the face of that reality, the church rejoices because in the depths of woe and sorrow and pain, we hear the promise of God that He will have compassion!

To those who hope in Him, He is good. To those who seek Him, He gives good things, for He has promised, *“Seek and you will find.”* Knowing that He is good and knowing that good will surely come, it is good for us to wait quietly for the salvation of the Lord. His goodness will not fail. Amen.

The peace of God which passes all understanding, keep your hearts and minds in Christ Jesus. Amen.

PRAYER FOR THE FIFTH SUNDAY AFTER PENTECOST

Almighty God, eternal Lord and Creator of all things, You are our light and our salvation; You are all we ever need. We, Your children, come before You in prayer, and ask You to place Your hands on us in blessing.

Bless us with sincere faith in Your Son Jesus Christ. Grant that we may believe in Him with all our hearts, trust in Him alone for salvation, and have the assurance of everlasting life through Him. Renew us through our baptism day by day, as we live in hope and wait for our complete salvation in the new creation.

Keep us in Your fatherly care in this world, which has been ruined by sin. Guard us in all times of danger, and protect us in every peril. Keep us safe, by Your grace, that we may never lose our faith because of our sins and frailty. Grant that we may keep growing in faith and spiritual understanding. When death approaches, make us strong by Your sure promises, and finally give us the joy of Your eternal presence, complete redemption of our bodies, and resurrection to life eternal.

Fill Your Church with Your grace and power, O Lord, so that the light of Your truth may shine throughout the world. May all people know Your will and rejoice in Your salvation. Equip our pastors to be Christlike in mercy and love, and true leaders of Your people. Give us true joy as we serve You and one another, living in newness of life.

Hold Your hand of blessing over our land. Preserve us from war, earthquake, destructive storms, famine, disease, violence, tyranny, persecution, treachery, and rebellion. Guide those in government, business, education, and entertainment, so that they may live in the knowledge that You are Lord, and no other god may share Your glory.

Be gracious to all our homes and families. Enable children to grow in body, mind, and spirit, enjoying favour with God and man. By Your Spirit equip all parents with Christian faith and insight, and the constant desire to obey Your will.

Be merciful on all who suffer sickness, sorrow, the weakness of age, the weariness of hard work, separation from loved ones, uncertainty about the future, broken relationships, or any other burden. Give them Your rich peace. Show Yourself to be a God always ready to help, and give faith, trust, courage, and hope to all in need.

We pray for these things to You, heavenly Father, in the name of Jesus Christ, who, together with You and the Holy Spirit, is the one God, to be praised for ever and ever. Amen.

The Fifth Sunday after Pentecost

Lamentations 3:22-33

²² It is because of the LORD's mercies that we have not been completely cut off. For His compassion has not come to an end.

²³ It is new every morning. Your faithfulness is great.

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2 Corinthians 8:1-9, 13-15

¹ Fellow-Christians, we make known to you the grace that God has bestowed on the churches of Macedonia. ² While they were severely tested by trouble, their overflowing joy and their deep poverty overflowed to produce their rich generosity. ³ For I testify that they were freely willing, according to their ability and beyond their ability. ⁴ They urgently pleaded with us for the privilege of sharing in this ministry to God's holy people. ⁵ They did not do as we expected but through the will of God first gave themselves to the Lord and to us. ⁶ This has led us to urge Titus to complete among you this work of kindness also, in the same way as he had earlier begun it. ⁷ As you abound in everything, in faith, in speech, in knowledge, in all eagerness and in your love for us, see that you abound in this work of kindness also! ⁸ I do not say this as a command but am using the eagerness of others to test how genuine your love is. ⁹ For you know the grace of our Lord Jesus Christ, that, although He was rich, yet because of you He became poor, that you through His poverty might become rich...

¹³ We do not desire others to have relief and you to have hardship but equality. ¹⁴ At the present time, your plenty will supply what they need, that their plenty may also supply what you need, that there may be equality, ¹⁵ as Scripture has said: "Anyone who gathered much did not have too much, and anyone who gathered little did not have too little."

Mark 5:21-43

²¹ After Jesus had crossed over again in the boat to the other side of the lake, a large crowd gathered around Him while

He was beside the lake. ²² Then one of the synagogue rulers, named Jairus, came. When he saw Jesus, he fell at His feet. ²³ He pleaded earnestly with Jesus: "My little daughter is at the point of death. Come and lay Your hands on her that she may be saved and live!"

²⁴ Jesus went with him. A large crowd was following Him and pressing around Him.

²⁵ There was a woman who had had a flow of blood for twelve years. ²⁶ She had suffered much under the care of many doctors and had spent all that she had. She had not been helped at all but instead had become worse. ²⁷ Since she had heard about Jesus, she came from behind in the crowd and touched His garment. ²⁸ For she said, "If I only touch His clothes, I shall be made well."

²⁹ Immediately the source of her haemorrhage dried up, and she was aware in her body that she had been healed from her affliction. ³⁰ At once Jesus realised in Himself that power had gone out from Him. He turned around in the crowd and kept asking, "Who has touched My clothes?"

³¹ His disciples kept saying to Him, "You see how the crowd is pressing around You, yet You ask, 'Who has touched Me?'"

³² However, He kept looking around to see the woman who had done this. ³³ The woman, in fear and trembling, because she knew what had happened to her, came and fell before Him and told Him the whole truth.

³⁴ He told her, "Daughter, your faith has made you well. Go in peace! Be healed from your affliction!"

³⁵ While He was still speaking, some men came from the ruler of the synagogue and said, "Your daughter has died. Why do you trouble the Teacher any further?"

³⁶ Jesus disregarded the message that they were telling and told the ruler of the synagogue, "Stop being afraid! Only believe!"

³⁷ He did not allow anyone to go with Him except Peter, James and John, the brother of James. ³⁸ When they came to the home of the ruler of the synagogue, Jesus saw a noisy crowd, with people weeping and wailing loudly. ³⁹ When He had gone inside, He asked them, "Why do you go on making a commotion and weeping? The child is not dead but asleep."

⁴⁰ They began to laugh at Him. However, He put them all outside, took with Him the child's father and mother and those who were with Him and went in to where the child was. ⁴¹ He took the child's hand and said to her, "Talitha, kum!" which means, "Little girl, I tell you, get up!"

⁴² Immediately the girl stood up and walked around (she was twelve years old). At once they were completely astonished.

⁴³ Jesus gave them strict orders that no one should find out about this and told them that something should be given to her to eat.