

Pastor Jordan Gades Sermon, Ash Wednesday 2020, 2 Cor 5:15 - 6:10

Grace and Peace be to you from God our Father and our Lord Jesus Christ, Amen.

There's a lot to preach on in the texts for today so buckle in, 25-minute sermon incoming. No not really but there are great stories with great messages from each of these texts. Messages that speak deeply to what we are living in and amongst right now.

Take our Reading from that small prophetic book of Joel. Joel is all about this huge plague of locusts descending on Israel and tells how people deal with this huge tragedy and deal with God in the midst of their pain. Hearing any echoes of our own age ringing out of that?

Then there is the Psalm. Psalm 51 is King David offering his sincere apology to God for kinda abducting and then sleeping with a married woman and then killing her husband. There are just a lot of things wrapped up in that story.

And then there is the gospel of Matthew and Jesus trying to explore what it means to have faith and how to show that faith. We know that's important and we are also still trying to figure that out.

But it was in our Letter from Paul that we hear the strongest message for us as we begin our journey of fasting, prayer, and faith through Lent. Today begins our Journey of Reconciliation.

Paul is preaching to the people. Paul is trying to hammer home this message of what is possible through Christ. And in the midst of him preaching about hope and renewal, I hear this other voice. I hear this message about how we treat ourselves. We are treating ourselves as imposters. We think of ourselves as the ones with nothing. Our human voice drones on and on with these same words; imposter, unworthy, weak, depressed, desperate, you are nothing, you are poor, every day you are dying, every day you deserve punishment.

This world is broken and with that brokenness, that voice breaks through to point out every day and, in every way, how broken this world is, how broken we are. That's not easy or fun to deal with but we need this voice. We need to know that this is not how it's supposed to be.

In this world as it stands, our hands, do not do enough, our minds are not smart enough, our vision is too dim. This is not how it is supposed to be.

But the message of that incessant voice, that voice we hear within and from other people, is not the end of the story. It is **not** the last word about us. We are made complete in Christ. That voice is weak, our God is Strong.

Every day that voice burdens us a worm in our ear, breaking us down and trying its best to break other people down. Telling us what our neighbors and friends and family are doing wrong. How they are imposters and weak and deserving of punishment.

And while we think that anger and judgements might be correct, It is God who brings Justice

And that voice just doesn't quit. It starts whispering like that snake in the garden. Why isn't God doing more? Why didn't God do that? Why didn't God take care of that? Those doubts might seem like something to grab on to. But it is God who is our Truth and Hope.

In all these things God breaks in and flips the tables. In all these things God calls into this ministry of reconciliation.

We are broken. But God makes us whole. To all those things which we find within ourselves that we try and hide as weaknesses and shame; It is God who heals and strengthens. God who makes us into the people we want to be every day.

It is God calls and leads us back into fruitful relationships with our neighbors. God who joins us back together, united as beloved children of God. This is most certainly true. God builds and rebuilds. We need to go out those doors proclaiming that truth for all the world to hear.

We will not be divided or cast apart by earthly powers. Instead we are being reconciled together in peace and justice by the creator of Heaven and Earth and none shall stand against our God.

Today is the day we mark ourselves as being made new in the image of our God. We treat today that that beautiful day that Paul was talking about

See, now is the acceptable time; see, now is the day of salvation! We are putting no obstacle in anyone's way, ... as servants of God we have commended ourselves in every way: through great endurance, in afflictions, hardships, calamities, beatings, imprisonments, riots, labors, sleepless nights, hunger; by purity, knowledge, patience, kindness, holiness of spirit, genuine love, truthful speech, and the power of God;

This is that day. This is that time. We have seen God reconcile the possible with the impossible. We mark this date as the day which we turn to God to have God lead us. This day we have marked our heads and our hearts knowing that we are under God's power and justice. We are called into the world for the sake of the world. We show this every day in word and deed. We are given the same call as Jesus was given.

So, to the voice inside of us and inside of everyone head that **only** says “Remember you are dust and to dust you shall return”. To that voice, we answer with the good news of what our God has and is doing. We tell that voice, and all who will hear, about the hope we have because of God. We answer, we are made more than dust through our God.

Amen.