

July 16, 2017 When It's 9-6 In The Top Of The 9th Pt. 2
Psalm 5

Baseball and the summer are intimately entwined. Since we met last...think of it... just 7 days, the Blue Jays lost the last game of the first half of the season. The All Star game has been played and won in extra innings by the American League. The Jays are in that league which causes one to ask, just how good are they? Some interpreters would say at this point they appear to be in the strongest set of teams in Baseball.

And of course, the second half of the season has begun. The Blue Jays won their first game of the second half. Their record for the last half of the season over the last 4 years is the best in all of baseball. The odds are in favour of Bautista rediscovering power. Of Sanchez finding his groove on the pitching mound. Of Tulowitzki finding his average at the plate and of Donaldson making remarkable catches and plays at 3rd base. Smoak is having a best in his career season at the plate, one of the ingredients Joe Carter listed as necessary for a World Series win. There is hope.

Baseball as a metaphor, reminds us of something else. The 9th inning always means that for someone...in the case of a tied score...both teams, face the reality that time is running out. That in a second as a unit of time, it could be over. That is

2.

one of the lessons that applies to our examination of Psalm 5. But first....

Psalm 5 offers us something a little unexpected, a treatise on the nature of sin. This week we are looking at the unit or the paragraph that includes verses 4-6. It begins with this singular, Biblical, universal statement: God does not take pleasure in evil. In the midst of this prayer of David, that is the place his thoughts have led him. God does not take pleasure in evil. This is the Old Testament. Two things need to be said. In the culture of the Old Testament world this is one of the things that makes the God of the Bible, the living God, the "I am" God who is the essence of existence and life...unique. In the world of the Old Testament there are gods worshipped and served by Israel's neighbours who love war and destruction. There are gods who require human sacrifice, who sponsor infanticide, prostitution, the majority of the victims being female of course. In stark contrast is the God of Moses, Abraham, Isaac and Jacob.

The living God, which means, the real God, takes no pleasure in evil. His commandments include "thou shalt not kill." What means is that life is sacred. That every life is precious and of great value. That every person is made in the image of God, a reflection if you will of the Lord of life. And what that

3.

means is the history of civilization, of humankind has turned a page. Discovered a new era. And it is precisely at this point we begin to discover the definition of sin.

“With you (O God), the wicked cannot dwell.” A line has been drawn. It is a line that divides. God the Lord, takes no pleasure in evil. And what is more HE expects HIS people to take no pleasure in evil. Breaking HIS commandments, taking pleasure in what HE has called evil means we cannot live with God. To be one of HIS people we are called, and David understood this, to will and strive to be like God. This means there is the people of God, and there are all the others. Choosing to live willingly in sin, means being on the wrong side of the dividing line. Morality is tied to faith which ties one to God.

Hebrew, the language of the Jews and the Old Testament is a repetitious language. It always communicates its deepest truths by repeating them in different words. “The arrogant cannot stand in your presence God.” The KJV uses the phrase, “the foolish” cannot stand in your sight. The foolish man is the man who believes so much in himself, he believes he can do no wrong. That he is always right. Very interesting given the times in which we are living. And the word goes on to say, “You hate all who do wrong.” To willfully choose to do what

4.

you know to be wrong, what God's word defines as wrong, is the essence of sinfulness. In this treatise on sin David is telling us that with God, if we want to be part of HIS people...we must do things His way. To choose to live by your own rules, is the guarantee of losing your way.

If you are beginning to feel a little uncomfortable with this uncompromising approach it is a sign of something significant...the degree to which our culture has left behind the way of Biblical faith. We are not unaffected by the cultural stream in which we bathe and from which we drink daily. David is remembering, as one who would forget at a crucial juncture in his own life, that God who is holy and real is uncompromising on this issue.

I said we have to hear in David's prayer, a treatise on the nature of sin. Verse 6 "You destroy those who tell lies. Bloodthirsty and deceitful men, the Lord abhors." One of the errors in the history of Christian theology was an attempt to categorize sins...the serious, and the less serious. It resulted in an approach to the faith that gave people hope of working their way out of their lostness. One error always leads to others. Here in verse 6 we are reminded there are no such things as little sins and big sins. Here in verse 6 we are reminded that if, as Frank sang, and Paul Anka wrote and composed, we boast, "I

5.

did it my way” we are almost guaranteed to make God angry with us.

The problem with a treatise on sin, and the nature of sin is that by itself, it leads us to the edge of the total loss of hope. Because the more we talk about sin, the more we become aware we are guilty of sin, and the question that provokes is who will save us. Let me put that in baseballese...who will save us when it is 9-6 for the other guys and time is running out? Whether or not we recognize this truth that is where we live. It is 9-6. We are losing. And it is the top of the 9th. The game is almost over. And it is not a game. This is serious.

So we have to borrow from verse 7: “But I, by your great mercy will come into your house. In reverence I will bow down toward your temple.” And this is also where we need to remember we are a New Testament people, who recognize the wealth of knowledge and faith that exists in the Old Testament. There is hope for one reason. It is not that we smart. It is not that we are better than anybody else. It is certainly not because we work hard at it. It is solely because God is merciful. It is solely because of God’s grace. And it is solely because we have been given this faculty, this ability, to choose to believe in Jesus, who is the embodiment of God’s grace strong to save the

6.

lost and sinful...a wretch like me. A wretch like you. A ship full of wretched souls...like the church.

David is right on two counts. We need to remember the depth, and the danger to which sin, our sin takes us. And we need to remember as well that the saving grace of the God who abhors evil in all its forms is the God who is merciful. I will never be able to describe how I came to faith and tasted God's mercy, except to talk about the grace of God. A picture is worth a thousand words. The picture is Calvary, Golgotha, Jesus crucified and dead, as the storm rolls in over the land. The grace of God...another picture...the empty tomb, an angel of God proclaiming to Mary, Mary and Salome...HE is not here. Not in the tomb. HE is risen. God, Father-Son-Holy Spirit...HE is the only hope we have when the score is what it is...and time is running out.

Let us pray;

O gracious redeeming and merciful God, we have glimpsed the seriousness of our sinfulness. We have glimpsed the seriousness of time's being short. We have also glimpsed the seriousness of your mercy and grace in Jesus. If we have never asked before and even if we have, we ask now...Forgive

7.

us. Receive our lives in your service in the time that remains.
And to YOU Lord, be the honour, the glory and the praise.
Amen