

August 8, 2021 What Shall We Make Of All Of This? Pt. 3
Psalm 90:7-10

Dearly Beloved;

It now seems very likely that there will be a 4th wave of Covid-19. This past week I saw numbers suggesting that 60 % of the Canadian population has been double vaccinated. The science suggests this will not be enough to prevent a 4th wave. The science also suggests it is virtually impossible to predict the severity of a 4th wave, although the Delta variant, is a much more serious virus than the original was. It is suggested that even double vaccination may not prevent illness. The good news is, double vaccination, appears to prevent severe consequences. This information underlines that we must continue to be careful. I will be doing everything I can to keep worship safe. We will continue to mask, use hand sanitizer, and minimize the time spent together inside the church, until we see evidence that we are safe. If the numbers remain low, we may return to limited singing in the early Fall. That is not a promise! I continue to seek expertise for opinions on the matter of singing. It is important to me, to return when we can, to safe praise practices. I know that you desire to sing the hymns and choruses. We, and I will try to lead the way. I will be cautious. Faith involves taking risks. This matter of singing however, is a risky matter that could potentially cost lives, and one such loss is too many.

These pastoral notes or announcements will continue for the time being. I do foresee a time coming when

they may not be so relevant. We are in God's hands. HIS hold on us is loving and safe. Let us worship HIM.

WHAT SHALL WE MAKE OF ALL OF THIS? Pt. 3

There is a systematic theology to the message of Psalm 90. That, in fact, is what we are unravelling in this series. The Psalm began by reminding us, as we do need reminding, that there has never been a time, a year, a month, a week, a day, an hour or a moment, when God has not been real and present and in control of the ultimate destinies, of this planet, the nations, and individual people. That is the implication of the declaration of the phrase, "from everlasting to everlasting, YOU are God." HE has not relinquished his hold on us, or anyone else with whom HE is pleased.

Having said that, it is also true and readily observable that bad things happen to good people, as well as to those who do not attend to the things of God, worship and service to others. Sometimes those bad things, are the result of our own foolishness. Sometimes they result from the foolishness, or the sinful intentions of others. As I have said so many times, we are not puppets. No invisible strings command our actions, or make us do what we do. It may seem a mystery, but while God has a destiny for each one of us, HE does not impose that destiny in such a way that HE interferes with our expression of willfulness.

The second part of the Psalm which we looked at last week, leads us into this reality. Our lives here on earth are

limited. Our bodies age and decay. I am reminded of that every morning when I rise from my bed. My joints do not work the way they used to. Remember the song: "How do I know my youth is all spent? Answer: My git up and go, has got up and went." My father never regarded himself a great singer but he would sing and hum this ditty: "The Old grey mare, she aint what she used to be...many long years ago." We live. We age. And the body returns to the dust from which it was formed. The mortality factor, if we insist on having a reason, is sin. The price of the freedom we exercise, not always to our benefit is that we stray and the consequences are real. Even "saved by grace, the grace of God" cannot save these bodies of ours. And that is why verse 10 begins by talking about the anger of God, HIS righteous judgement. We are consumed by God's anger.

That does not mean HE does not love us. It does not mean HE has not saved us by the means of the faith we invest in Jesus Christ, who is the embodiment of this same God we are talking about who made the heavens and the earth and us. But God drew a line in the sand, in the beginning. We were made for life that serves HIS will. We find it easier and more desirable to rebel. And this must always be added to these statements. HE forgives. HE created the solution to our lostness, again, not by attaching cables to our wrists, but by sending HIS Son into the world to save it from itself, to save us from ourselves. And before anyone panics, Jesus said, faith as small as a mustard seed could move mountains. A small measure of faith is all it takes to receive the grace of God and be forgiven.

The message of the Parable of the Prodigal Son as we call it, is that no sin or sinful lifestyle, is so powerful, that a small measure of faith, cannot undo our lostness. The Prodigal Son chose to go home to his father, and ask for a job as a servant. He receives a robe and a ring, and finds his father waiting for his return and celebrating his homecoming with a festive meal.

And when the older son, blows up at his father and says that's not fair. I've slaved for you and never wasted money on prostitutes, (by the way there is nothing in the parable to suggest that the younger son did that either). It calls to mind the British proverb, "evil be to him who evil thinketh". What does the father say to the jealous older brother? "Everything I have is yours...but I had to celebrate. My younger son was dead, and is alive again."

The whole idea of big sins and little sins, important sins and less important sins, is foreign to the thinking of God's word. There is just sin. Verse 8 says God sees our sins. All of them. And our secret sins are not secret. In God's realm they are exposed in the light. HE knows what we have done and what we do. There are no secrets that mere mortals can keep from the mind and knowing of God.

And so the word turns to the question of how long is our life span and what are we to expect? Our days do pass away. And we finish our days whether we die young or old with a moan, in utter weakness. The KJV actually translated that

phrase as a tale that is told. Reduced to a rumour. Something unsubstantial. A moan is not speech. It is sound without meaning. The weakness of age. Seventy years. Eighty if we are strong. Those are pretty modern sounding numbers aren't they. Be thankful for your time. It is limited.

And the nature of times? Trouble and Sorrow! This is what I make of the Pandemic and the destruction and suffering caused by Covid-19. It leaves a persisting legacy of trouble and sorrow, as the Great Depression of the dirty 30's did in the memories of my parents. And the word says our times pass quickly. Filled with difficulty and struggle. And we fly away. It is like we were never here. It shakes us. Indeed it does. It shakes us. Our confidence evaporates. We start wondering what will happen next? Unless? Unless we have a measure of faith. Confidence in God. Confidence in the grace of God. Confidence in the saving grace of the living God. Confidence in the Lord Jesus, and the accomplishment of Calvary, and the soothing hopeful presence of the Holy Spirit.

The Pandemic of 2020 to whenever it actually ends. What are we to make of all of this. The death of so many. The lingering sickness experienced by so many more. And with the spike in Frankford, we cannot say this only happens in the big cities. It is all around us. And just south of us.

I have never preached a series like this one in 52 years of ministry. I have never tried to beat a drum based on my own ideas. But this....feels like the judgement of God on a

whole wide world, for its sin and its denial of God and HIS will and HIS way for us. And the death toll in countries that are poor in comparison to Canada is a staggering reminder that we have been blessed with economic power, in a time when our economy ground to a sick and silent halt. As did the economy of Britain. As did the economy of our neighbour to the south. As did so many of economies of rich nations. And to those who would respond...it is a virus. Just a virus. I respond, in our pride we carried it around the world in a few months...because we thought we were invincible. That man is the master of things. It was Oscar Wilde who wrote, Glory to man in the highest for man is the master of things. Our sin is real. And powerful to destroy us beyond belief. I say...let us turn to God, for I believe we need a miracle. And God, not man...is in the business of miracles.

Let us pray;

Lord we recognize the teaching of your word. We recognize that sin has had its sway in the midst of our world. We recognize that the church and we in it have not taken sin seriously enough. We think we can keep secrets from YOU. YOU know our hearts, and our minds, and YOU see our rebelliousness. Forgive us we pray. Keep us safe we pray and our loved ones. Shorten the time of the season of this plague we ask, not because we are good, and not because we are strong. We bow before YOU. We want to worship YOU and serve YOUR will, and live in peace with our neighbours. In Jesus name we pray. Amen

