

Sermon Title: "The God Who Knows Your Name"

Biblical Passage: Isaiah 49:13-16

February 20, 2022

Passage Background and Summary

The passage for today begins with a celebration of the Lord:

Sing for joy, O heavens, and exult, O earth; break forth, O mountains, into singing! For the Lord has comforted his people, and will have compassion on his afflicted. But Zion said, "The Lord has forsaken me, my Lord has forgotten me," "Can a woman forget her sucking child, that she should have no compassion on the son of her womb? Even these may forget, yet I will not forget you. Behold I have engraved you in the palms of my hands; your walls are continually before me."

Sermon Points

In this text, we see a people in crisis. They are exiled, a long way from home. One can recall the Psalm that says, "How can we sing the Lord's song in a strange land?" The Psalm issues the question, and Isaiah answers. Isaiah calls the people to worship. Faith will cause you to worship in a strange land and in a strange time. We have been in this pandemic for two years now. There is inflation and bigotry. Why worship in a worrisome world?

To worship is to acknowledge that even when it is not evident to us, our God is still in charge of the world. Not only is God in charge of the world globally, but God is also concerned for and in charge of His people collectively. Furthermore, God is concerned for you personally. God has comforted His people and will have compassion on those who suffer. We are still in the pandemic, yet the prophet Isaiah speaks as though God has already delivered us.

The people in the text cry out, "'The LORD has forsaken me, my Lord has forgotten me.'" You may be going through a moment right now where you feel like the Lord has forsaken you. If you walk with God long enough, sooner or later you're going to have an argument with God. We can turn to the book of Job where Job asks God to show up so they can argue it out. Jeremiah asks, "Is there no balm in Gilead?" Today we may ask: Why are Black men shot and killed with no justice? Why are we still fighting for voting rights secured more than 50 years ago? To return to the Bible, even Jesus said, "Why has thou forsaken me?" In our darkest times, we may feel abandoned by God, but even amidst pain and uncertainty, Isaiah is able to claim God, "My Lord." There is still an intimate and personal relationship, even amid the pain.

Sometimes the unthinkable or unimaginable interrupts our sane world. Sometimes children are abused. Sometimes young people are stricken with cancer or some terrible disease. Sometimes we're on our way to church and a pandemic hits. Sometimes we think the problem is solved but the problem reemerges. Sometimes we wake up and Russia has surrounded the Ukraine, echoes of the Cold War. Sometimes the unthinkable happens, like a woman forgetting her nursing child as the scripture says. Yet, God says, "I will not forget you!" God says, "I have inscribed you in the palm of my hand." Your name and your narrative are in God's hand. While this may be a difficult time, God is still writing our story. We can trust the one true and living God. We can trust the God who makes a way out of no way. God loves us, and God knows our name. God knows everything about us, the good, the bad, and the ugly.

God loves us so much that He has written our name in the palm of his hand. We can think about when the young children used to write their names and their love interest's names on their desks or in their textbooks. We can think of those who get their loved one's name tattooed on their skin. Jesus already knew that we would fall short, but God put our name in the palm of His hand. The nail scars on Jesus's hands and feet are a physical representation of God's love for us. God has written our name in the palm of His hand. You are not forgotten. You are not forsaken.

Reflection Questions

1. How did the people of Zion feel about God in the scripture?
2. Have you ever worshipped amid your pain and suffering? Why did you do so?
3. Have you ever felt like God forgot about you? How did you deal with/get over that feeling?
4. Have you ever argued with God? Did it impact your relationship with God? How so?
5. How do you respond when the unthinkable or unimaginable happens? What lessons might we take from the scripture and sermon today as it relates to how we can respond?
6. What does it mean that God has "inscribed you in the palm of his hand"? How does that statement make you feel?