

September 18, 2022

Jeremiah 8:18 -9:1

“Self-inflicted Wounds”

*“The harvest is past, the summer is ended,
and we are not saved.”*

*For the brokenness of the daughter of my people I am broken,
I mourn, and horror has seized me.*

Such words are jarring when we read them from our holy book. Doesn't it feel contrary to the love and promises at the heart of faith? Or do our feelings betray our sense that if we wind up in the midst of loss and grief it is a sign that God has failed? Are our moments of loss signs of the absence of God? ***Or are the moments of loss and grief the precise moments when God is palpably present?***

*“The harvest is past, the summer is ended,
and we are not saved.”*

I have lost count of the number of times someone has asked, ***“How can you believe in God where there is sorrow and suffering the world?”*** The questions presume that the world has ever been a place where sorrow and suffering were absent. The assumption is that we live in paradise and the brokenness of life around us is *an aberration*. But where did we get that idea? The stories of our faith are filled with *tragedy, loss*, and the understanding that *this world is broken*.

If we do not encounter and embrace God's life in the midst of loss, our faith lacks necessary vocabulary to enable us to live in this world. What if, instead of feeling cheated by God, we understood God as being in the boat with us? What if God experiences the sense of, ***“That's just wrong,”*** when we do?

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What if our lives are so connected to God's life that we can not only carry God's life and love in the world, but God is impacted by our lives and experiences as well? What if our self-inflicted wounds impact God who gives life and loves us?

The Israelites in our text today were in a bad way because they had walked away from God given life into life **whose natural consequence was disaster**. And in their grief, they wondered, “God, where are you?” And God, through the prophet said, “Right here.”

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This is not at all transactional...*humanity has too long believed* that any God worth their salt manages our relationship in a transactional way – I believe in you, I sacrifice for you – and you God, keep me safe and give me the goods in return.

Friends, our God is **relational** not transactional. Our God connects with us, has empathy with us and *is willing to lead* if we will follow. We need to hear this passage. We need to understand it is a **normal part of human life** to encounter moments when:

*“The harvest is past, the summer is ended,
and we are not saved.”*

And in these moments, we know grief is appropriate, **and** God is with us. In this life disaster can strike – sometimes through self-inflicted wounds – and there is something to be said for **living with awareness** in those moments. No pretending it doesn't hurt – facing head on what is real. Walking with the God who never leaves us - into the future. Perhaps like Jacob at Peniel limping into God's future – with **great uncertainty but never alone**.

We live as God's children through all the seasons of life. And some of them are hard. Let us never imagine God is happy to have caught us misbehaving and takes joy in our suffering. No, our heavenly parent grieves over our mistakes and does not abandon us in our dark hours. Let's not be afraid to engage our grief that we may move forward from it.

The harvest is past, the summer is ended, and in our distress – God is with us.