

January 15, 2023

Psalm 40:1-11

“Sing the Faith: Guided by Faithfulness”

More than we know, we live with reference to time. *He is living in the past.* She is *so stuck* in the moment she can't see past the end of her nose. He has his head in the clouds, *always thinking about the future.* Each of us could fall into any of these three categories on any given day. And if we focus only on one time or another – I suppose it could be a problem. The truth is – ***we all live in all three times at once.*** We carry the past and work through it in the present while *attending to the present* in such a way as to enter and engage the future.

Our Psalm today is aware of this multi-dimensional existence in time. It begins with a reference to the past: *I was in trouble* – real trouble – and I waited and waited and finally God rescued me. *Happy are those* who live today and trust in the Lord -and *have confidence* the steadfast love of God will keep us safe in the future. All of this is in the Psalm: Past, present, and future.

Faithfully witnessing to God's faithfulness is an appropriate and meaningful way of life. It is part of *receiving* God's care to *share* with others how we have been encouraged and so offer encouragement. It also helps when times are tough to know there is nothing wrong with us – hard times come and go – yet, there is always hope because *even if God's time frames vary from what we want* – God is always faithful. ***The past can be a well of encouragement when the present is harsh or the future unclear.***

Did you catch the assertion in this Psalm that *God has given us the ability to listen?* Of all the important gifts of God – this is a gift which never goes out of style and never stops working. It is important to recognize that *hearing* is understood as *a complete whole of listening, understanding, and doing.* How many times have you heard a coach yell, ***“Listen up!”*** In my experience it happened a lot. And the coach rarely wants you to be *unchanged and inactive* by whatever you are told. God gives us ears to listen so we may *live and choose well in light of what we hear.* Really listening turns out to be a ***holy and faithful way of life.*** *Listening to God and each other grounds us in the storms and confusion which inevitably come.*

Having experienced God's care in the past – listened as a way of life in the present and charted a course into the future, we have confidence God's faithfulness will

carry us through. The Psalmist isn't pretending the future is known...God's mercy is necessary. But we confidently **live into** the unknown because God is faithful.

Our Hymn from the Psalms today inspires us to understand that past, present, and future – **life is all about faithfulness: God's and ours**. You have heard this before – from another hymn book. “*Our God, our help in Ages past, Our hope for years to come, our shelter from the stormy blast, and our eternal home.*” It has been there all along...encouraging us in all facets of time.

Let's take a moment with this reality. Settle in, close your eyes and let your mind *wander back into the past* – to a place where you felt the *care and love of God*. It is always with us – but we have special experiences where God's presence and care are closer than others. Whatever the contours of that moment – welcome the feelings and renewal that go with it. As we relish this experience of faithfulness, let's consider the present. It is, of course, *easy to see difficulties* in any moment in time. But this moment is *filled with possibility* because *it has arrived* by God's faithfulness. Let's accept the open-ended nature of this present moment knowing its potential exceeds the sum of its parts.

We have *remembered faithfulness, embraced possibility* and now give the future a chance. Bid farewell to the spirit of Eeyore – believe *God holds what we cannot know in loving hands*. Open your eyes – feel the power of God's life in us – past, present, and future.

By God's mercy, the way of faithfulness is before us; Let's travel with grace together.