

Coming Home: Home Is Where We Meet

Presented By Scott Walters on 12/08/19
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What does 'salvation' look like? Is it the man on the corner with the sign, "The End is Near"? Is it the cosmic final battle between the forces of good and evil? Is salvation to be found, as our culture claims, in how much we possess or the amount of our net assets?

Psalms 85 offers a different vision. It starts with the reminder of how God has saved the people in the past – blessing the land, restoring the people, and forgiving their sins.

Then, beginning in verse 8, the psalm puts forth a vision of God's intentions for the future.

Being that this is from the Old Testament, you might imagine that vision to come through a prophesy offered on some mountaintop. It doesn't. Instead the vision comes in a typical act of worship where an everyday preacher does what any preacher, priest, rabbi, or pastor does every week – listens to sacred texts and asks, "Let me hear what God the Lord will speak."

No smoke or torn curtains or burnt offerings here. No "thus saith the Lord." Just an ordinary person trying to figure out God's word and what to say in a sermon. First the psalmist hears and offers an echo of Isaiah. God will "speak peace to his people....Surely God's salvation is at hand....that his glory may dwell in our land."

But then as all preachers do – and it doesn't matter if they pastor an old downtown congregation or a mega-church on the outskirts of town or a white-clapboard one-room building surrounded by a field corn – the psalmist offers his (or her) vision of that word.

And what a vision it is: The psalmist promises that in God's salvation, "Steadfast love and faithfulness will meet; righteousness and peace will kiss each other."

It is a beautiful word. It is a vision and a word of salvation and God's intention for the world that stretches from earth to heaven and back again. It is also a vision of salvation that may be a surprise to many people.

One of things that I have learned about being an itinerant pastor – a pastor who is appointed to serve by the Bishop – is that you couldn't get away to be with extended family on holidays like Christmas or Easter. And because we've had to be flexible Jane and I have never had any real firm Christmas traditions.

That's why Jane has been known to say to me and others in the church, how much she's looking forward to celebrating a pagan holiday. And by "pagan holiday" she means something like Memorial Day, the Fourth of July, Labor Weekend, and maybe Groundhog Day. Over the years, we probably have developed more family traditions for Memorial Day as we have for Christmas or Easter.

And I know that to a certain extent, each and everyone one of us has to answer the questions, "What is it to come home?" "What is home?" Some find their home by going back to their family homestead; others spend time with those they love; for others who can't get home anymore, their home may exist only in their memories and photo albums.

Last week, Isaiah told us that God can offer us the reassurance that we are not abandoned. That God has come down to be with us in all the places we call 'home.'

This week, God offers mercy and pardon. God speaks peace to the faithful and those who want to be faithful.

What is home? Maybe home is simply wherever we meet. It is where we attend to the paths where our lives come into contact with others and with God.

This week, the Psalmist says that home is the place where "steadfast love and faithfulness meet;

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where righteousness and peace will kiss.”

Both Bethlehem’s manger and Calvary’s cross are signs of salvation and home for us. But so is the life lived in between, in all the ways Jesus made flesh those words of love, faithfulness, righteousness and peace.

And for Christians, salvation is not just believing in Jesus Christ, but trying to make real in our lives the things that Jesus made real.

Psalm 85 can open our eyes to signs of God’s saving work even beyond the church.

In the film *“Babette’s Feast,”* General Loewenhielm’s speech at the end of the meal is nothing less than a sermon on Grace:

“Grace, my friends, demands nothing from us but that we shall await it with confidence and acknowledge it in gratitude. Grace, brothers, makes no conditions and singles out none of us in particular; grace takes us all to its bosom and proclaims general amnesty. See! that which we have chosen is given us, and that which we have refused is, also and at the same time, granted us. Ay, that which we have rejected is poured upon us abundantly. For mercy and truth have met together, and righteousness and bliss have kissed one another!” “Salvation is at hand,” says the psalmist, “when steadfast love and faithfulness shall meet, righteousness and peace shall kiss.” Home is anywhere we meet God, face-to-face and hand-in-hand. Home is the assurance that we though we fall short of who we want to be, Christ still died for us. Home is knowing that we meet God’s people and welcome them in with the love of Christ.

In all of your activities and in all of your business, may you see and know such salvation and that the place where that happens is your true home.