Sermon Nov 13, 2016

Grace and Deep Peace to you during this time of uncertainty. Amen.

Growing up as a child I remember when the song Ke sarah sarah was popular. When I was just a girl I asked my mother will I be pretty, will I be rich and she said, k sar ah, sa rah whatever will be, will be, the future’s not ours you see, you see K sara sarah.

And then the musical Anne came along with it’s some about the sun’nal come out tomorrow, song in a time when Annie’s life was anything but sunny. I think it’s human nature to wonder and even worry about the future. In fact most humans are really good about knowing how to worry. We worry about really serious things and we worry about things that are really nothing to worry about, but we worry anyway. We take time to worry about what will or will not happen today but we also worry about what will happen ten years from now or at the end of our lives. As I have listened to the radio, read the newspapers and my facebook friends writings I have been hearing so much worry about the future of our friends that are not white males, our country and the world. This worrying style of life is not just a contemporary problem, it is ages old.

As I read all of our texts for today I heard that all of the writers were addressing their communities in some way about the worries and concerns of their day, their tomorrows and their futures.

I believe we have all experienced many times when what’s happening in life just seems almost impossible or there’s hard or awful or almost impossible situations to cope with. We hang in there by thinking that the future has to be better than what is happening right now. Our first reading and our psalm speak of the future when God will judge the people. All of the “unfairs” in everyone’s lives will be taken into account and things will be made fair. Those who were unfair will be judged and the scales of justice will be made even in everyone’s sight. Our psalm even brings that future into the present by suggesting that we praise God in every way possible for what will happen. Now when teachers want to get the kids ready for what they will be doing shortly they create what is called an anticipatory set. In the first reading we hear of the hope that the sun of righteousness will be arriving. Our psalm first stops to remember how God has already done marvelous things and then speaks of the future when God will be fair in his judgment of the whole world and the people equally. Oh what comfort and a process of anticipation is being shared here. There’s hope for the end of worrying somewhere in the future.

To be fair to the Thessalonians who Paul was writing to in our second reading we need to remember that early Christians believed in the parasoia, the quick return of Jesus, perhaps even before any Christians died. They had the attitude that if Jesus is coming today or tomorrow why should I worry about anything? Like other groups from time they were ready to be done with everything here on earth. We don’t hear that they wore white robes or waited on mountain tops but they definitely had checked out of day to day activities and work. Paul doesn’t tell them to worry during the waiting time. Instead he encourages everyone to continue to work, to carry on with their lives here. I’m wondering if Paul in our last verse has more to his statement than just a moral comment. Perhaps they need to not be weary of sharing the gospel of God’s love both in mission and ministry. This is something I believe we need to hear over and over. As long as we’re in this world we have work to do as Christ’s body to the world.

Luke wrote our Gospel probably 80-90 years after Jesus was crucified. During the time before Mark and Luke’s writing the story of Jesus was handed down through oral transition and memory. Perhaps Luke was writing down what was remembered of Jesus sayings. Another possibility is that Luke put words in Jesus mouth to describe what had been and what was happening to the people of his time. We know that indeed the temple was demolished by the Romans. No stone remained and where the temple stood a mosque was built that still stands. During the time that the Jewish insurrections against the Romans were happening indeed many men came forward and claimed to be a prophet. Some people followed them and so many were killed first by the Romans but also by their countrymen during what amounted to civil war in Jerusalem. Indeed, during a time when blame for all the bloodshed needed to be given out the Christians, this small band of Jesus followers did become the scapegoat for the situation. Jesus followers were arrested and tried by countrymen and Romans alike. Out of the pain, the false accusations and the need for Christians to flee the area, the story of God’s love and the story of Jesus life, death and resurrection ended up being spread all over the known world. It was during a time of great suffering and pain and division that the Good News of God’s love was spread to so many who were worrying and suffering.

Out of our texts today I heard for my life and hopefully for yours, first God is with us. We are not alone at any time. Knowing that God is with me frees me from worry about what happened, what is happening and what will happen. God is with me no matter what. I don’t have to lose hope because God is not only there for me but God is there for each and all of us. Second I don’t have to stand around and wait for Jesus to come or the world to change. I need to keep working for the kingdom of God. The kingdom is not here in it’s fullness yet but whenever I love God and my neighbor the kingdom is breaking into this world. I don’t have to wait for God to judge the world. I can bring hope to so many by my actions right now. And finally, if as a result of my sharing in the mission of telling the world that God loves them either by words or deeds someone judges me I don’t have to worry about what they will think about me. I am commissioned to testify about God’s love shown through Jesus Christ. May we all be able to speak and reach out in hope. Amen.