

**Sixth Sunday of Pentecost – July 5, 2015**  
**Good Shepherd Ev. Lutheran Church**

*Pastor Charles Heup*

**Lamentations 3:22-33 (NIV)**

Because of the LORD's great love we are not consumed, for his compassions never fail. 23) They are new every morning; great is your faithfulness. 24) I say to myself, "The LORD is my portion; therefore I will wait for him." 25) The LORD is good to those whose hope is in him, to the one who seeks him; 26) **it is good to wait quietly for the salvation of the LORD.** 27) It is good for a man to bear the yoke while he is young. 28) Let him sit alone in silence, for the LORD has laid it on him. 29) Let him bury his face in the dust-- there may yet be hope. 30) Let him offer his cheek to one who would strike him, and let him be filled with disgrace. 31) For no one is cast off by the Lord forever. 32) Though he brings grief, he will show compassion, so great is his unfailing love. 33) For he does not willingly bring affliction or grief to anyone.

Dearly beloved by the Lord,

Your call is very important to us. Please hold for the next available customer service representative. After a couple of minutes of music (which may or may not ease your tensions) a voice comes on the line. We're sorry all of our agents are busy serving other costumers. Please hold. Your call will be answered in the order it was received. More music ... then, thank you for calling. Please hold ...

How long do you listen to the music before you hang up and try your call another day? I don't know about you but I've got a fairly low level of patience in situations like that. Sometimes the reason for my call is urgent in my mind and so I'll wait it out but I won't be happy. Other times I'll just give up and try another time. Sometimes the wait is worth it – especially if the end result of my call turns out to be favorable for me.

In our text for today, Jeremiah urges us to put our hope in the Lord as we wait to for him to bless us with his mercy and compassion. He writes

**Theme:** It is good to wait quietly for the salvation of the Lord.

1. His compassions are new every morning
2. No one is cast off by the Lord forever

I'm not sure how many of you are familiar with the background and book of Lamentations but some familiarity with it will enhance our understanding and appreciation of this text.

Lamentations was most likely written by the Prophet Jeremiah; who labored among God's people at a very challenging time in their history. Why don't we let Jeremiah himself tell us about these times? He wrote in Lamentations 1:8, "**Jerusalem has sinned greatly and so has become unclean.**" The spiritual leaders were spiritually bankrupt and the people continuously rebelled against the Lord in spite of the warnings that Jeremiah had given them. As a result, the Lord treated his people like the enemy raising up the Babylonians who destroyed the city of Jerusalem and deported many of its inhabitants to Babylon. Even the great temple of the Lord was desecrated. For those who were left behind there was only starvation and extreme poverty greater than any of us could possibly imagine. They are surrounded by the stench of death and dying. Here's how Jeremiah described the scene.

**The Lord is like an enemy; he has swallowed up Israel. He has swallowed up all her palaces and destroyed her strongholds. He has multiplied mourning and lamentation for Daughter Judah. (6) He has laid waste his dwelling like a garden; he has destroyed his place of meeting. The LORD has made Zion forget her appointed festivals and her Sabbaths; in his fierce anger he has spurned both king and priest. (7) The Lord has rejected his altar and abandoned his sanctuary. He has given the walls of her palaces into the hands of the enemy; they have raised a shout in the house of the LORD as on the day of an appointed festival... Her king and her princes are exiled among the nations, the law is no more, and her prophets no longer find visions from the LORD. (10) The elders of Daughter Zion sit on the ground in silence; they have sprinkled dust on their heads and put on sackcloth. The young women of Jerusalem have bowed their heads to the ground. (11) My eyes fail from weeping, I am in torment within; my heart is poured out on the ground because my people are destroyed, because children and infants faint in the streets of the city. (Lamentations 2:5-11 NIV)**

As our text reminds us, Jeremiah knew where to turn for rescue, deliverance, and salvation. The Lord alone has the cure for sin and the destruction he had allowed to come upon his people as a discipline. **Because of the LORD's great love we are not consumed, for his compassions never fail. 23) They are new every morning; great is your faithfulness. 24) I say to myself, "The LORD is my portion; therefore I will wait for him." 25) The LORD is good to those whose hope is in him, to the one who seeks him; 26) it is good to wait quietly for the salvation of the LORD.**

These words are a burst of sunshine on a gloomy day! Jeremiah speaks of God's great love – the love that had made the people of his nation his very own people. In his love, he promised Abraham that all the inhabitants of the earth would be blessed through his offspring. In his faithfulness and love, God blessed the descendants of Abraham while they lived in Egypt. He was faithful to them in spite of the fact that they were not faithful to him as he led them through the wilderness to the land of promise. Because of his love and faithfulness, he repeatedly sent them his messengers to call them to repentance and faith for all the years that they had lived in the land of promise. He tried to reach them with his word to show them how much he cared, how much he loved them, how faithful he was – but they would not hear, they would not listen, they would not be turned from their sinful ways.

*"Their history was a record of his love and action on their behalf. Every morning, every week, every year of their national existence, they had received new evidence of God's mercy. They had broken faith on their part. Even so they could rely on their God. He does not break faith. He keeps his word. They could joyfully confess, [his compassions never fail. 23) They are new every morning;] great is your faithfulness." (Peoples Bible, Jeremiah Lamentations, Gosdeck, page 356)*

Sitting in the ashes of their ruined city, they could wait with confidence and hope, knowing that the Lord would not disappoint or disappoint them. He would provide them with salvation – a rescue from their physical woes and distress and more importantly a rescue from their sins. He would bless them with eternal safety and security in faithfulness to his compassion and love. Therefore, Jeremiah encouraged the people by telling them, "It is good to wait quietly for the salvation of the Lord. His compassions are new every morning."

It is good also for us to reflect on the Lord's love and faithfulness as evidenced in our lives so that we also will be encouraged by Jeremiah's words. In his love for us, the Lord made us his own children – calling us

to faith through his Word and Sacrament. He remained faithful to us even though we have not always been faithful to him.

In his compassion, he has not treated us as our sins deserve. In his love and compassion he daily blesses us with all that we need for our body and life – sparing us the poverty and blood shed that affects many of the nations of this world.

As children of God, we like Jeremiah may very well lament the sad state of affairs in our country – a country whose citizens, although they claim to be Christian, are not willing to take a stand on God's word and to practice it in their lives. Like Jeremiah, we can lament the sins of our country together with our own sins. Like Jeremiah, we can be a beacon of light to a people living in darkness – sharing the word and will of God – speaking a message of repentance and hope.

At times, our patience is tried severely. We might grow impatient with the Lord – thinking he has put our requests and us on hold. Jeremiah reminds us – that's not true. **Because of the LORD's great love we are not consumed, for his compassions never fail. 23) They are new every morning; great is your faithfulness. 24) I say to myself, "The LORD is my portion; therefore I will wait for him." 25) The LORD is good to those whose hope is in him, to the one who seeks him; 26) it is good to wait quietly for the salvation of the LORD.**

2. No one is cast off by the Lord forever

**For no one is cast off by the Lord forever. 32) Though he brings grief, he will show compassion, so great is his unfailing love. 33) For he does not willingly bring affliction or grief to anyone.**

Once again the prophet directs us to God's compassion and unfailing love. It was true in the case of Jerusalem at the time of Jeremiah that the Lord treated his people as the enemy – but that was an act of tough love – intended to get their attention. Ultimately, he will not cast them off forever. He would forgive and restore them.

These words of the prophet point us to Christ. We deserved to be crushed for our sins, stricken by God and afflicted. But, as Isaiah reminds us Christ was crushed in our place, he was stricken by God and afflicted by him so that in him we might have the righteousness of Christ. Christ shows us the great love and faithfulness of the Lord. **God so loved the world that he gave his one and only Son, that whoever believes in him shall not perish but have eternal life.** (John 3:16 NIV)

It may seem as if the Lord is taking a long time to right the wrongs – to bring eternal salvation to his people but as Peter reminds us the Lord is patient not wanting anyone to perish, but everyone to come to repentance.

It may be true that the Lord's patience might in some ways contribute to the heartaches, the trials, the difficulties that we endure as Christians living in a sinful world but the love, the compassion, the faithfulness of our Lord will enable us to wait patiently for his salvation.

We know that the Lord is our shepherd who watches over us with his rod and his staff, leading us through the valley of the shadow of death to the eternal banquet tables of heaven. When the chief shepherd appears he will give us a crown of glory that will never fade away (cf. 1 Peter 5:4) Therefore wait quietly for the salvation of the Lord. Amen.