

Gaines Congregational United Church of Christ

June 13, 2021

Old Testament Reading; 1 Samuel 15: 34-16: 13

Responsive Reading; Psalm 20

Epistle Reading; 2 Corinthians 5: 6-10, 14-17

Gospel Reading; Mark 4: 26-34

Special Reference; Job 2: 7-10

Sermon Title: **May the Lord Answer You in the Day of Trouble**

By Rev. Jim Gardner

Summary: Every Rose garden comes standard with a lot of thorns.

In the book of Job, we read a disturbing news flash. Job 2: 7-9 says, "So Satan went out from the presence of the Lord, and struck Job with painful boils from the sole of his foot to the crown of his head. And he took for himself a potsherd with which to scrape himself while he sat in the midst of the ashes. Then his wife said to him, 'Do you still hold fast to your integrity? Curse God and die!' But Job said to her, 'You speak as one of the foolish women speaks. Shall we indeed accept good

from God, and shall we not accept adversity?’ In all this Job did not sin with his lips.”

The title of today's message is the first line of our Psalm reading, “May the Lord answer you in the day of trouble.”

Notice this does not say, “May the Lord answer you IF you have a day of trouble.” There is no IF to it. You will have a “Day of trouble”. Not only will you have a day of trouble, you will have many, many days of trouble throughout your lifetime. The question is, how will you face that day of trouble? Will you be like the wife of Job and curse God and die or will you be like Job and do what you need to do as you listen for the word of God to help you through it?

In our Psalm, King David is about to go into battle with a formidable foe. As David prays, he forgets the enemy and realizes the wonder and power of the God that he is addressing, his attitude becomes one of faith and it is contagious. The people joined in and say basically, “Who is afraid of chariots and armies when we have God?”

Are you afraid of chariots and armies that you can see or are you confident that you are under the awesome protection of a powerful and loving God that has a special interest in your future? A God that has adopted you and even sent His Son to you to be a role model for you as how to live and how to pray and even how-to beat death. Are you willing to face a

sometimes-tough life with God or are you ready to give up and, “curse God and die”? Oh, by the way, when it comes to a “sometimes-tough” life I think that maybe Jesus Himself might have some experience in that condition and may well be able to relate to anything that we might go through.

Are you able to have faith in a God that you only see through the beauty of creation and the life-giving light in the eyes of someone that cares for you? Can you accept adversity or are you going to curse God and die? Curse God and die is worse than death as we know it. This is talking of the death of hope. This is a spiritual death. This is a kind of zombie existence where you go through the motions of living but have no cure or rest. Without God we are worse than nothing.

In our Epistle lesson Paul says that if anyone is in Christ, he is a new creation; old things have passed away; behold, all things have become new. Paul says that we will all have our day before God, but that will not be a threatening experience. It will be more like the school’s sports banquet where all the athletes are recognized for the achievements. For anyone that has accepted Jesus Christ it will be a celebration of the faith of the faithful.

Our gospel shows that the wonders of God can not be understood with the limits of our natural condition. We can plant seeds and water and cultivate them but we can not know

how God makes them grow or how such small seeds become such big plants. We just know that it happens.

In the gospel of John, John 12: 24, Jesus says, “Most assuredly, I say to you, unless a grain of wheat falls into the ground and dies, it remains alone; but if it dies, it produces much grain.”

This passage is referring to the pending death of Jesus on the cross, but it has significance to us also. Every time we go through a “day of trouble” we grow in our understanding of the plight of others experiencing a similar event. Because of our troubles God is better suited to use us as His hands and hearts of healing in His name.

The Bible says that if we die with Christ we will rise with Christ and if we suffer with Christ, we will be better equipped to relieve the suffering of other children of Christ.

If military drill Instructors and fitness coaches push their charges to the brink to make them better equipped to perform their future duties, shouldn't we expect at least as much from God? He prepares us to run the good race and to fight the good fight and all He asks is if we are going to listen for His answer, or are we going to quit on God and curse God and Die?

Remember, with every Rose Garden comes a standard issue of thorns. Grab a Band-Aid and listen for the Lord's answer in the day of trouble.

Hallelujah and Amen