



Sermon on Psalm 19
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Please pray with me: Speak, O Lord, in words that we can hear. Open our hearts to your word, and plant the light of your grace deep in our hearts. Amen.

Until this summer, I could probably count the number of times I've been in a true downpour on one hand.

And then came the month of June, and does anyone know when the last time we've had that much rain in June was? Anyone have a guess?

- 1874, and we were close to even breaking that record!

I am not accustomed to having to think about rain, and so when the first downpour of the season came, we were unprepared.

We were startled awake in the middle of the night, only to realize that 20 or so of our windows were wide open, and all the rain gutters were turned toward the house instead of away from it.

Of course that time, we were in the comfort of our own home, but since then, I have many a time found myself hundreds of feet from my car in the midst of a downpour, wishing I had finally remembered to put an umbrella on the shopping list.

We turn to our gospel lesson as the disciples are trying to figure out what to do in the midst of their own downpour of sorts. And as ours sometimes do, too, theirs comes with a great windstorm. But rather than in the safety of their homes, they are in the peril of a sinking ship.

Just moments earlier, they had stepped into that boat with Jesus, likely expecting a perfectly delightful trek across the sea. They might have expected, and we might expect, too, that no storms would surge, and that no waves would come crashing down into their boat, with Jesus right by their side.

But then the storm does start surging, the waves do start crashing, and before they know it they are being assaulted by wind and water from every direction.

"Teacher, do you not care that we are perishing?" They cry out.

→ Lament is, most simply, an **honest** conversation with God when our boat is sinking.

"My God, my God, why have you forsaken me?" Our Psalmist cries out.

And it is a bone-chilling cry that we remember coming also off Jesus' lips on the cross.

After last week's sermon about cultivating a grateful heart,

- it might seem as if lament would do just the opposite of what we want, keeping us focused on the negative and stopping us from becoming thankful.
- It might seem, too, as if voicing our concerns, our struggles, and even our complaints to God is not a very faithful thing to do.

- We might think that a Christian should trust in God at all times, and as the old adage goes, that if we haven't got anything nice to say, we shouldn't say anything at all.

But here's my question: what would happen if in our relationships, whenever something was wrong we simply sealed our lips and stopped talking?

Is that the advice you would give newlyweds?

-No? And why not? Why would that be bad advice?

→ In our relationships with others, as in in our relationship with God, always we have to keep the lines of communication open if the relationship is going to grow.

→ And as it turns out, the simple the act of talking to God is a profound act of faith.

So in the midst of his downpour, the Psalmist does just that—he keeps talking to God.

- In just the first stanza, the Psalmist asks God why he has forsaken him and why he is far from helping him. He says that God simply doesn't answer him, and that he finds no rest.

The words are shocking, but

- When God is silent, we are allowed to ask God why he is silent.
- When we feel forsaken or as if God is far away from us, we are allowed to tell God that that is how we feel.

When we do that—when we open ourselves up to God and honestly tell him where we are,

- we are making space for God to plant his peace in our hearts.
- We are making space for God to **move us** to a new place,

and so you'll see that the whole Psalm is not filled with complaint, but that the Psalmist is moved.

I'm going to read you the first lines of many of the stanzas, and I just want you to listen for that movement:

My God, my God, why have you forsaken me?
 Yet you are holy, enthroned on the praises of Israel,
 But I am a worm,
 yet it was you who took me from the womb
 I am poured out like water
 But you O Lord, do not be far away!

- Did you hear that movement, that back and forth?
- Now perhaps there is a long pause between each stanza, as the Psalmist wrestles with God, and as he struggles to find any words at all.
- Perhaps it is several days before he can move from the first stanza to the second, and do anything but complain.

→But through it all, the Psalmist does not cut off his conversation with God. He keeps right on talking, and in a moment we'll see that by the end of the Psalm, God has indeed moved him to a very different place.

Sometimes, though, you and I will find ourselves stuck in that first paragraph of the Psalm,

- sitting in a sinking ship wondering where God is.
- Sometimes, we will even find ourselves without any words with which to pray.

But even in that place, God is with us:

Romans 8 tells us that when all we've got in our being is deep sighs, the Spirit is with us, turning even those sighs into prayers.

And when we find ourselves in that sinking ship, the body of Christ that is this community can carry us, too.

Let me tell you what I mean:

Many years ago, there was a New Testament professor at the seminary named Johannes Rosenthals, who was an excellent professor and beloved by many. He was an eastern European Lutheran who had been through World War II and the refugee camps that followed.

Somehow, his faith remained strong throughout it all, until many years later when his wife died.

Her death snapped his identity from him,

so that one day he went to the president of the seminary and resigned.

"I quit," he said, "because I don't believe anymore."

The president simply replied: "That's ok, you're not quitting. You keep on teaching until you believe again. Until then, we'll believe for you." We'll believe for you.

Now I don't know when or where that professor might have regained his sense of faith, or even what happened to him.

But I do know how the story ends for the disciples, for the Psalmist, and for us:

Jesus wakes up, he rebukes the wind, and says to the sea: Peace, be still.

Peace, be still.

The storm rages, but peace, be still.

And the Psalmist finds his own peace by the end of the Psalm:

"In the midst of the congregation, I will praise you," he says, "you who fear the Lord, praise him!"

We don't know what has changed, or whether the situation is resolved, but somehow he is left with a song of praise in his heart and on his lips. .

You and I never know precisely how the peace of Christ will enter our hearts, and we never know how or when that song of praise will find it's way in, either.

But when we wait, it is with confidence, knowing that the creator of the universe, the savior of the world has calmed seas much more turbulent than ours. Amen.