



# still waters

home church studies

## Psalm 77.1-2, 11-20 [Worship]

1 | cry aloud to God, aloud to God, that he may hear me. 2 | In the day of my trouble | seek the Lord; in the night my hand is stretched out without wearying; my soul refuses to be comforted.

11 | I will call to mind the deeds of the LORD; I will remember your wonders of old. 12 | I will meditate on all your work, and muse on your mighty deeds. 13 Your way, O God, is holy. What god is so great as our God? 14 You are the God who works wonders; you have displayed your might among the peoples. 15 With your strong arm you redeemed your people, the descendants of Jacob and Joseph. Selah

16 When the waters saw you, O God, when the waters saw you, they were afraid; the very deep trembled. 17 The clouds poured out water; the skies thundered; your arrows flashed on every side. 18 The crash of your thunder was in the whirlwind; your lightnings lit up the world; the earth trembled and shook. 19 Your way was through the sea, your path, through the mighty waters; yet your footprints were unseen. 20 You led your people like a flock by the hand of Moses and Aaron.

### Consider:

### [Words]

Jesus does not sugar-coat his call to discipleship. There were many candidates to become his followers. But he tells them of the requirements of travel with him. There will be no safe place; discipleship is not a picnic. It requires going with him and not looking back to previous loyalties. He is on his way to Jerusalem (Luke 9:53). There he will face the authorities of the Roman Empire; he will deal with his Jewish compatriots who have colluded with the empire. And, eventually, the empire will execute him.

How strange that Paul, who knew the ending of this narrative, calls this “freedom” (Galatians 5:1). Discipleship after Jesus does give freedom, of a very peculiar kind. It is not self-indulgent freedom (5:13), but freedom

freedom that enhances the neighborhood. The sum of the new freedom is “love of neighbor” (5:14) that variously involves “joy, peace, patience, kindness, gentleness, self-control” (5: 22). The new freedom of the gospel refuses the ordinary ways of the world that include quarrels, dissensions, carousing and fornication (5:19-21). New life is under new freedom and new mandate. Life with Jesus is indeed another way in the world.

Psalm 77 traces the same route to newness. At the outset, the psalmist is preoccupied with self (77:1-9). But by verse 11, the psalm has refocused on the God of the Exodus who gives freedom. In remembering, the psalmist dares to hope and imagine that the same God “who works wonders” will do that yet again, here and now. These readings provide a ready convergence of old exodus and new gospel freedom, of defying Pharaoh and facing imperial authority in Rome, being on the way to Sinai covenant and to neighborliness that is the only true freedom. It is no wonder that Jesus (and his disciples) had to go to face the authorities, because the authorities—ancient and contemporary—do not want neighborliness, because neighborliness precludes all of the self-indulgence that besets concentrations of self-preoccupied power.

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## [Scripture] Galatians 5.1, 13-25

1 For freedom Christ has set us free. Stand firm, therefore, and do not submit again to a yoke of slavery.

13 For you were called to freedom, brothers and sisters; only do not use your freedom as an opportunity for self-indulgence, but through love become slaves to one another. 14 For the whole law is summed up in a single commandment, “You shall love your neighbor as yourself.” 15 If, however, you bite and devour one another, take care that you are not consumed by one another. 16 Live by the Spirit, I say, and do not gratify the desires of the flesh. 17 For what the flesh desires is opposed to the Spirit, and what the Spirit desires is opposed to the flesh; for these are opposed to each other, to prevent you from doing what you want. 18 But if you are led by the Spirit, you are not subject to the law. 19 Now the works of the flesh are obvious: fornication, impurity, licentiousness, 20 idolatry, sorcery, enmities, strife, jealousy, anger, quarrels, dissensions, factions, 21 envy, drunkenness, carousing, and things like these. I am warning you, as I warned you before: those who do such things will not inherit the kingdom of God. 22 By contrast, the fruit of the Spirit is love, joy, peace, patience, kindness, generosity, faithfulness, 23 gentleness, and self-control. There is no law against such things. 24 And those who belong to Christ Jesus have crucified the flesh with its passions and desires. 25 If we live by the Spirit, let us also be guided by the Spirit.

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