



still waters

home church studies

Psalm 85

[Worship]

1 LORD, you were favorable to your land; you restored the fortunes of Jacob. 2 You forgave the iniquity of your people; you pardoned all their sin. Selah

3 You withdrew all your wrath; you turned from your hot anger. 4 Restore us again, O God of our salvation, and put away your indignation toward us. 5 Will you be angry with us forever? Will you prolong your anger to all generations? 6 Will you not revive us again, so that your people may rejoice in you? 7 Show us your steadfast love, O LORD, and grant us your salvation. 8 Let me hear what God the LORD will speak, for he will speak peace to his people, to his faithful, to those who turn to him in their hearts. 9 Surely his salvation is at hand for those who fear him, that his glory may dwell in our land. 10 Steadfast love and faithfulness will meet; righteousness and peace will kiss each other. 11 Faithfulness will spring up from the ground, and righteousness will look down from the sky. 12 The LORD will give what is good, and our land will yield its increase. 13 Righteousness will go before him, and will make a path for his steps.

Consider:

[Words]

Today's readings all deal with the theme of God's steadfast love and redeeming forgiveness of an undeserving people. The psalmist says it plainly: "You forgave the iniquity of your people; you pardoned all their sin. You withdrew all your wrath; you turned from your hot anger." It's not as if God ignored the people's sin. God's responses to iniquity are "wrath" and "hot anger." In fact, the behavior of the nation of Israel has resulted in the forfeit of the covenant promised at Sinai (Exodus 19.5-6), the most dreadful and extreme curse possible: "You are not my people and I am not your God" (Hosea 1.9).

The word that follows, though, carries the full weight of Israel's hopes and dreams and aspirations: *Yet*. Despite all this, despite the unforgivable acts of "whoredom," despite the turning away from God, yet...Israel remains the "children of the Living God." Will you be angry

with us forever? Will you prolong your anger to all generations? God answers with forgiveness, with steadfast love, with salvation.

That pattern of sin answered by forgiveness, iniquity met with salvation, continues in the person of Christ. As Paul wrote to the Colossians, "You were dead because you were sinners; God has brought you to life, forgiven us all our sins...and canceled every record of the debt that we had to pay...by nailing it to the cross" (Colossians 2.13-14).

It's worth noting that in doing so, God also "disarmed the rulers and authorities"—or, as the Jerusalem Bible puts it, "got rid of the Sovereignities and the Powers" (2.15). Salvation and redemption are never merely personal or pietistic acts; God's steadfast love doesn't stop with individual forgiveness but extends to the banishment of the unseen principalities and powers that lurk behind and incite individual unfaithfulness. We are healed and made whole as the people of God. And as the people of God we pray, "Show us your steadfast love, O Lord, and grant us your salvation."

[Scripture]

Colossians 2.6-19

6 As you therefore have received Christ Jesus the Lord, continue to live your lives in him, 7 rooted and built up in him and established in the faith, just as you were taught, abounding in thanksgiving. 8 See to it that no one takes you captive through philosophy and empty deceit, according to human tradition, according to the elemental spirits of the universe, and not according to Christ. 9 For in him the whole fullness of deity dwells bodily, 10 and you have come to fullness in him, who is the head of every ruler and authority. 11 In him also you were circumcised with a spiritual circumcision, by putting off the body of the flesh in the circumcision of Christ; 12 when you were buried with him in baptism, you were also raised with him through faith in the power of God, who raised him from the dead. 13 And when you were dead in trespasses and the uncircumcision of your flesh, God made you alive together with him, when he forgave us all our trespasses, 14 erasing the record that stood against us with its legal demands. He set this aside, nailing it to the cross. 15 He disarmed the rulers and authorities and made a public example of them, triumphing over them in it. 16 Therefore do not let anyone condemn you in matters of food and drink or of observing festivals, new moons, or Sabbaths. 17 These are only a shadow of what is to come, but the substance belongs to Christ. 18 Do not let anyone disqualify you, insisting on self-abasement and worship of angels, dwelling on visions, puffed up without cause by a human way of thinking, 19 and not holding fast to the head, from whom the whole body, nourished and held together by its ligaments and sinews, grows with a growth that is from God.