

Sermon Lamentations 3 22 33 5th Sunday after Pentecost Series B

Sermon: 5th Sunday after Pentecost

Text: Lamentations 3:22-33 (vv.22,23)

Theme: God's love in our daily life

Goal: To assure that we belong to God (by Creation and by Salvation through Christ) and that every day is a new day by His grace to serve Him as His steward and to serve our neighbour

Dear Friends,

Introduction: The issue of ownership is something crucial in our lives. If something doesn't belong to me, I don't care. If it's mine, I care and I'm even jealous about. - For example: I wash and take care of my car; but I don't wash the car of my neighbour. I care and clean my house; but I don't clean the house of my neighbour... - Coming to church's matters: If I don't feel that this is "my church", I will not care for it. I will enjoy what the church has to offer me, but the Elders and the Pastor has the responsibility to care for the church... But if I'm sure that this is "my church", I will care for it and will give my time and skills to help the church for the good of all.

But, thinking honestly, are we really owners? Will we take something with us in our coffin? Doesn't the image of a manager fit better to our situation? – Managers/stewardship is the theme that we will raise once a month in our sermon in preparations for a "brainstorm" meeting that the Elders are organizing.

I – The Israelites

The Israelites of the time of Prophet Jeremiah, who wrote the text for today, they thought they were owners of the Promised Land. They forgot that God had warned them through Moses when they were at the edge (border?) of the Promised Land to conquer it: "When you have eaten and are satisfied, praise the LORD your God for the good land he has given you. Be careful that you do not

forget the LORD your God, failing to observe his commands, his laws and his decrees that I am giving you this day...You may say to yourself, “My power and the strength of my hands have produced this wealth for me.” But remember the LORD your God, for it is he who gives you the ability to produce wealth, and so confirms his covenant, which he swore to your ancestors, as it is today.” (Deuteronomy 8:10,11,17,18).

In spite of the warnings of the prophets God sent them, they lived a selfish life, far from God, just enjoying the riches they had accumulated and forgetting to care of the poor. Therefore they lost everything they had in a war. Those who were not killed in the war were taken into exile. It was fulfilled what God had said to them through Moses: “If you ever forget the LORD your God ... I testify against you today that you will surely be destroyed. Like the nations the LORD destroyed before you, so you will be destroyed for not obeying the LORD your God.” (Deuteronomy 8:19).

Jeremiah was the Prophet at that time. He had preached since he was a youngster (Jeremiah 1:6), calling the king, the authorities and the people to return in repentance to God; but they didn't listen to him. They even persecuted him! – Jeremiah saw when Jerusalem and the temple were destroyed and burned down. Seated among the ruins, he wrote the Book of Lamentation, a wailing poem. But in the midst of the ruins and of the laments, the Prophet sees God's mercy. Not all of them were killed. Jeremiah was alive and he confesses: “Because of God's great love we are not consumed, for His compassions never fail. They are new every morning; great is His faithfulness.” He acknowledged that his life was in God's hand and he was just a servant of God, a manager/steward of God's blessings.

II – The Macedonians

The Macedonians at Paul's time had a totally different approach on

this matter, as Paul reports in the Epistle reading for today (2 Corinthians 8). They were just converted Christians by the mission of the Apostle. And they acknowledged that whatever they had, even their own body and life, belonged to the Lord. They left their former selfish way of life according to the pagan's pattern to live a new life in Christ. They mirrored themselves in the example of Christ, who was rich but left everything behind Him to come down to earth to help humankind (v. 9). They saw the challenge of helping the poor in Jerusalem as a "grace" that God was giving them. Paul testifies about them: "And now, brothers and sisters, we want you to know about the grace that God has given the Macedonian churches. In the midst of a very severe trial, their overflowing joy and their extreme poverty welled up in rich generosity. For I testify that they gave as much as they were able, and even beyond their ability ... they exceeded our expectations: They gave themselves first of all to the Lord, and then by the will of God also to us." (2 Corinthians 8:1-5).

"They gave themselves first of all to the Lord." This is the secret! We don't belong to ourselves anymore; but we belong to God, who purchased us by the blood of Jesus to be His beloved children. And as our lives belong to God, so also whatever we have and do belongs to God. We are His responsible managers/stewards.

III - St. Thomas

We experience God's love, compassion and faithfulness every day of our lives. "They are new every morning" and we praise God for this. We have to be reminded of this truth, because the temptation is big to consider that everything belongs to us, and that we give to God maybe two hour of our week to come to the service and some cash. No! The time and money we spend with our family, the time we spend at work, even the free time we enjoy in holidays, what we are able to buy,- everything belongs to God and we are managing it. The

time and skills we spend at the church and the money we give to the church is just a part of our stewardship. David said in a prayer: “Everything comes from You, (O Lord), and we have given You only what comes from Your hand” (1 Chronicles 29:14).

Conclusion: From a Biblical Stewardship Principles (LCMS) we highlight today the two first ones: *God stewards are God’s stewards!* And: *God’s stewards are managers, not owners.* This means: We are not our own stewards, but God’s. This focuses our eyes not just on earthly profits or daily needs, but it gives a bigger dimension to our lives. We are privileged people working under a very good boss and owner: The King of the Universe, *the Father Almighty maker of heaven and earth* as we confess in the Apostles’ Creed, who put the man “in the Garden of Eden to work it and take care of it” (Genesis 2:15).

To serve God is not just to be in the church. We serve Him through our job and through our entire life. We cannot disassociate our Christian life from our daily life. - More: This God, knowing our weakness and incapacity, sent His own Son to earth to lead us from the wrong way of life to the good one according to His will. Jesus restored the good relationship with our Creator that was lost due the sinful nature of humankind. He paid for our debts on the cross and assured us a new life through His resurrection. We are new creatures, as Paul says: “Therefore, if anyone is in Christ, he is a new creation; the old has gone, the new has come” (2 Corinthians 5:17). And, as we enlarge our vision on God’s will and our role as His stewards, we see our neighbour as a fellow that God put on my way to care for him as well – beginning with our family, the closest fellows, and going to all other people, especially the needy.

May God helps us to focus on Him and on His love, compassion and faithfulness every morning as we begin our daily work, giving thanks because “They are new every morning”. Amen.