

Sermon Psalm 85 7th Sunday after Pentecost Series B

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Text: Psalm 85 (v. 10)

Theme: God is always faithful to His people

Goal: To assure that God is faithful now and will be faithful in the future as well, as He was in the past.

Dear Friends,

Introduction: Unfortunately the rate of crime is growing in many countries. People complain about violence, corruption, lack of security. This all happen at our doorstep as well. What can be done?

Billy Graham's daughter was interviewed and was asked regarding the attacks on Sept. 11 in the USA "How could God let something like this happen?"

Anne Graham gave an extremely profound and insightful response. She said "I believe God is deeply saddened by this, just as we are; but for years we've been telling God to get out of our schools, to get out of our government and to get out of our lives. And being the gentleman He is, I believe He has calmly backed out. How can we expect God to give us His blessing and His protection if we demand He leave us alone?"

In the light of recent events...terrorists attacks, school shootings, etc. I think it started when Madeleine Murray O'Hare complained that she didn't want prayer in our schools, and we said OK (she was murdered, her body found recently). - Then someone said you better not read the Bible in school... the Bible says thou shalt not kill, thou shalt not steal, and love your neighbour as yourself. And we said OK. - Then Dr. Benjamin Spock said we shouldn't spank our children when they misbehave because their little personalities would be warped and we might damage their self-esteem. We said an expert should know what he's talking about. And we said OK (Dr. Spock's son

committed suicide).. - Then someone said teachers and principals better not discipline our children when they misbehave. And we said OK. - Then someone said, let's let our daughters have abortions if they want, and they won't even have to tell their parents. And we said OK. (And she brought lots of other facts related to these mentioned. She concluded :) - Now we're asking ourselves why our children have no conscience, why they don't know right from wrong, and why it doesn't bother them to kill strangers, their classmates, and themselves. Probably, if we think about it long and hard enough, we can figure it out. I think it has a great deal to do with "WE REAP WHAT WE SOW." Funny how simple it is for people to trash God and then wonder why the world's going to hell. Funny how we believe what the newspapers say, but question what the Bible says." (From the Internet).

The people of Israel were living a very difficult time when this Psalm 85 was written: violence, poverty, a severe drought, lack of hope. The psalmist poured out his complains and sorrows before God, raising several questions. But he didn't only raise questions. He looked to the past and reminded God of His faithfulness in the past. And he looked to the future with hope, trusting that God is able to restore His people again because His faithfulness never ends.

I – God's faithfulness' in the past

Three moments of God's faithfulness are mentioned in the psalm:

1) God had showed favour to His land. Crops were good, people were settled, there was peace and prosperity was visible. – We confess this in the first Article of the Apostles' Creed, when Luther explained: *I believe that God...gives me food and drink... and richly and daily provided me with all that I need to support this body and live.*

2) God had forgiven the iniquity of His people. We confess this in the

Second Article of the Apostles' Creed: *I believe that Jesus Christ... has redeemed me... from all sins.*

3) God had set aside all His wrath. We confess in the Apostles' Creed: *I believe that I cannot by my own strength believe in Jesus... but the Holy Spirit has called me... and gives me eternal life.*

Looking to our past, since God has accepted us in His Kingdom through the Holy Baptism, and remembering the many blessings we received throughout our life, and that we are still alive in spite of all violence in this world, - we have to raise our hands in praise and thanksgiving to God as well!

II – A plead for mercy

Therefore, the psalmist pleads with God for mercy in the midst of the distress of the people. “Will you be angry with us forever? Will you not revive us again?” It seems that he is knocking desperate on a closed door, begging for God's mercy: “Show us your unfailing love, o Lord, and grant us salvation.”

The way of prayer is always open to us. The door of God's mercy is not closed, but it was opened wide by Jesus when He died and rose again for us. As God's children, we shall not only complain about our problems and the violence of the world, but, as the Apostle Paul says: “Do not be anxious about anything, but in everything, by prayer and petition, with thanksgiving, present your request to God. And the peace of God, which transcends all understanding, will guard your hearts and minds in Christ Jesus” (Philippians 4:6, 7).

III – Commitment and hope for the future

But the psalmist knows as well that far from God he will never solve his problems by himself. If he wants help, he has to search for it in the right place. So, he commits himself to God and confesses his

hope in God's faithfulness: "I will listen to what God the Lord will say; he promises peace to his people. Surely his salvation is near those who fear him." If I don't listen to what God has to say to me, how can I follow His paths? How can I find comfort in the dark hours? How can I find peace and forgiveness if I don't fetch them in the Absolution and in the Holy Communion? God's Means of Grace are available in abundance among us. Not so in many other countries, unfortunately.

Conclusion: And to conclude his words of hope, the psalmist makes several statements. Try to visualize them and let your imagination flow when you listen to these statements, written in a fine poetic style: "Love and faithfulness meet together; righteousness and peace kiss each other (like good old friends when they come together and kiss each other). Faithfulness springs forth from the earth (like the winter grass and the bulbs are now springing); and righteousness looks down from heaven (like a sunray shines in the midst of a cloudy sky). The Lord will indeed give what is good... Righteousness goes before him and prepares the way for his steps."

The true righteousness comes to us by faith in Jesus, when we are forgiven and declared righteous before God. The whole concept of relationship with God and with our fellows change when the Holy Spirit enlightens us with His gifts of faith, love and hope. Even the whole concept of life is different for someone who trusts in God above all things (as the First Commandments says).

Jesus said that things will become worse and worse as the end comes closer. But there is hope for the people of God. As God rescued the righteous Lot from the wicked city of Sodom when it was destroyed, God will always rescue His people and give us strength to surpass the trials and temptations, because His faithfulness never ends. Amen.