

Sermon

'Return to the Lord, O my soul'

Children's address, Year A 2017, Pentecost 2



All that matters is to be at one with the living God

to be a creature in the house of the God of Life.

Like a cat asleep on a chair

...yawning before the fire.

Who has ever seen a cat, asleep on a chair, in front of a fire?

How did that make you feel?

What about a dog? Have you ever seen a dog, asleep on a chair, or a couch, in front of a fire?

How did that make you feel?

In holy scripture this morning, psalm 116, the psalmist says, 'Return, O my soul, to your rest.' He wants himself, the best part of himself, the special place within himself – 'my soul' – to return to God. To rest in God. To love God.

Like a cat asleep on a chair, in front of a fire. Like a dog asleep on a chair, in front of a fire. It's a lovely image don't you think? Makes you just want to curl up, too, on a chair, in front of a fire, and fall asleep.

‘Return, O my soul, to your rest. For the Lord has dealt bountifully with you’.

Rest in God, peace with God, is simple enough. It does not come to us easily, however. The psalm writer says:

‘I love the Lord..

For you have delivered my soul from [harm],

my eyes from tears,

my feet from stumbling.

I walk before the Lord

In the land of the living.

I kept my faith, even when I said,

‘I am [suffering]’.

The psalm writer loves the Lord, because the Lord has saved him from harm. Because, like a tender and loving Father, God once before has saved him. Saved him from harm. Given him new and bountiful life.

Life is difficult. And sometimes in life, bad things happen. But, if the psalmist is right, what might be bad at the time, might in the end be good for us.

'I love the Lord..

Because you have delivered my soul from [harm],

my eyes from tears,

my feet from stumbling.

I walk before the Lord

In the land of the living.

I kept my faith, even when'

..bad things happened.

Through his experience of hardship, of difficulty, of bad things, the psalm writer came to know the Lord. Came to know the power of God. Can to know that God is trustworthy and true.

And only by that knowledge of God, as trustworthy and true, as worthy of his trust, was the psalmist able to return to the Lord. To rest in the Lord. To have peace with God. Not in his head only [point to head]. But way down deep, where it really matters, in his very soul [hand on chest].

Because God helped him, the psalm writer knew God. By his experience of God helping him, saving him, the psalm writer could say of God.

'Gracious is the Lord, and righteous;

Our God is merciful.

The Lord protects the humble;

When I was brought low, he saved me.

Return, O my soul, to your rest,

For the Lord has dealt bountifully with you.'

The psalm writer discovered the love of God – came to understand that God loved him – through his experience of God saving him. His experience of God's salvation.

Like the psalmist, I myself came to know God like this. When I was brought low, he saved me.

'I love the Lord..

Because he delivered my soul from [harm],

my eyes from tears,

my feet from stumbling.

I walk before the Lord

In the land of the living.

I kept my faith, even when the

bad thing happened.

'How can I repay the Lord:

For all his benefits to me?

I will take up the cup of salvation:

And call upon the name of the Lord.

I will repay my vows to the Lord:

In the presence of all his people.

The Lord be with you