

Finding strength for the tough times in Prayer

Hymn: By the waters, the waters of Babylon

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Invitation: *Here is the table of the Lord, we are gathered at the family table, a foretaste of things eternal. Come, when you are fearful, to be made new in love. Come, when you are doubtful, to be made strong in faith. Come, when you are regretful, and be made whole. Come, old and young, there is room for all*

Hymn: All who hunger, gather gladly (1-2)

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Prayer of Thanksgiving: *The Lord be with you. And also with you. Lift up your hearts. We lift them to the Lord. Let us give thanks to the Lord our God. It is right to give our thanks and praise.* (we continue in prayer) *Come to us, Spirit of our Lord of love, and let the bread and wine before us bear your life to our life, nourish us with his vision of hope, and unite us in one body of peace. Nourish us with your brokenness, Renew us with your poured out life, Empower us with your powerlessness, that we may take root in your risen life and bear fruit in your world. You are our life; You are our hope; You are our peace; And we praise you.*

Hymn: All who hunger, gather gladly (3)

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Communion

Following communion *Thank you, O Christ, for this feast of life. We are fed by your love; we are strengthened by your life. We are sent forth into this world to live into the visions God has laid on our hearts. We are now commissioned to: feed as we have been fed, forgive as we have been forgiven, love as we have been loved. Thanks be to God. Amen.*

Hymn: Now let us from this table rise (1, 3-4)

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The faithful love of God never ceases; it is inexhaustible! God's mercy and compassion is new every morning! Great is Your faithfulness, O God! So go into the week ahead with courage, and with joy. Trust in God, and wait patiently for God to guide. For God is good to all who seek and God's loving presence goes with us.

Postlude

WELCOME TO...

The Presbyterian Church of Saint David

October 02, 2016



Prelude

Call to Worship: *We gather, as God's people, bringing our fears and pain, knowing that when our spirits have grown cold, God rekindles the gift of faith in us. We gather, as God's people, hanging our broken hearts on the branches of the tree of life. knowing that while friends may turn against us, God transforms enemies into sisters and brothers. We gather, as God's people, hungering for healing and hope, knowing that even when life is no picnic, God prepares a feast for us.*

Hymn: How shall I sing to God (1)

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Opening Prayer: *Spirit of God, enlighten our hearts to the reality of divine presence in our midst. Let our worship be pleasing in your sight, so that our gathering is an experience of deep communion with you and one another. In the name of Jesus Christ, this is our prayer. Amen.*

Hymn: How shall I sing to God (2) 697

Confession: *Because we trust in God's faithfulness, we are free to make our confession to God and call for his compassion. Let us, therefore, confess our sins that we may be renewed in his grace. Turn your ears our way, God, and listen. Open your eyes and take a long look at us. We know that we don't deserve a hearing from you. Our appeal is to your compassion. This prayer is our last and only hope: Lord, listen to us! Lord, forgive us! Through Christ our Lord. Amen.*

Affirmation of forgiveness: *Call this to mind, and therefore have hope: the steadfast love of the LORD never ceases, his mercies never come to an end; they are new every morning; great is God's faithfulness. The LORD is your portion, therefore hope in him. The LORD is good to those who wait for him, to the soul that seeks him. It is good that one should wait quietly for the salvation of the LORD. It is good to wait as we hear the words of Jesus: 'Your sins are forgiven.' Thanks be to God.*

Hymn: How shall I sing to God (3) 697

Surviving The Tough Times How do you survive tough times? How do you handle the scars (physical or emotional) from tough times? We all have to survive tough times, whether we like it or not. Sometimes the tough times are communal (like 9-11); we have the support of others to sustain us. Sometimes the tough times are personal; the support of others is not guaranteed to help us through divorce, illness, loss of job, etc. Tough times present us with choices. We can wallow in self-pity and lash out at others, or we can use these times to grow spiritually. *Psalm 137: 1 By the rivers of Babylon, there we sat down. Yes, we wept, when we remembered Zion. 2 On the willows in its midst, we hung up our harps. 3 For there, those who led us captive asked us for songs. Those who tormented us demanded songs of joy: "Sing us one of the songs of Zion!" 4 How can we sing the song of YHWH in a foreign land?* (World English Bible)

Hymn: By the Babylonian Rivers 98

Psalm 137 presented the exiles in Babylon with the choices of tough times. Physically and spiritually, they were in a foreign environment. In 137:1-4, the people were so depressed they would not sing national songs before their captors (despite the fact they might sing this psalm in private). Of course, their lament was also mixed with their opposition to the Babylonians. They refused to give their jailers the satisfaction of belittling them.

5 If I forget you, Jerusalem, let my right hand forget its skill. 6 Let my tongue stick to the roof of my mouth if I don't remember you; if I don't prefer Jerusalem above my chief joy.

In 137:5-6, the lament turned inward. The author spoke an implicit curse. If he or his audience ever forgot the City of David (and its Temple that represented the dwelling place of God), may that person be crippled (withered hand) or stuck speechless (tongue to pallet). In the eyes of the author, the one who forgot their roots and the land of their people (i.e., assimilated into the foreign culture) was not a full human being.

7 Remember, YHWH, against the children of Edom, the day of Jerusalem; who said, "Raze it! Raze it even to its foundation!" 8 Daughter of Babylon, doomed to destruction, he will be happy who rewards you, as you have served us. 9 Happy shall he be, who takes and dashes your little ones against the rock. Finally, in 137:7-9, national pride won out over the minimal sense of compassion for their enemies. The author cursed the Edomites, who plundered the city after the Babylonians. He cursed the Babylonians, as he declared a beatitude on those who would end the line of the enemy with the present generation.

In the heat of tough times, it's easy to curse instead of bless, cling to pride despite all else is lost, and treat the critic as the hated enemy. Those reactions are natural. However, grace might cause the person to think twice. After all, Jesus told us to love our enemies and do good to those who hate us.

When the tough times are over, we still might be tempted to indulge in some sort of "payback." These "scars" are also natural. But we should also remember that, after the resurrection, Jesus still had the scars to his wounds. We, too, will suffer the after effects of our tough times. The question remains: in the end, do tough times hinder us or transform us?

(List your tough times on a piece of paper. Offer these times to the Lord. If you feel you can, burn the list as a sign that those times are history. Larry Broding (Copyright 1999-2016).