

Theme: **Great is God's Faithfulness**

Text: Lamentations 3:22 – 33

Occasion: 6<sup>th</sup> Sunday after Pentecost/Independence Sunday

Date: July 1, 2018

Place: Shepherd of the Rockies LCMS, Bailey, CO

*Grace and peace to you as you learn from God's past about your future, from God, our Father, our Lord and Savior, Jesus Christ and the Holy Spirit. Amen.*

(slide #1) How many of you have ever seen this canyon along the Colorado River? I'm sure that many of you have seen this section of the Colorado River but it doesn't look like this anymore, because this picture was taken in 1931 just before an incredible work project started during the period of history in the United States that is called the great depression. Today this sight, that many of you have seen looks like this. (slide #2) The Hoover Dam is an amazing place and an amazing feat of construction. The construction of the Hoover Dam started in 1931 and was completed in 1935. (slide #3) In the process of constructing the Hoover Dam thousands of unemployed people came from 47 different states to the southern tip of Nevada to build, at that time, the tallest dam and the largest hydroelectric plant in the world. (slide #4) For much of the United States at this time there was a lot of suffering and the loss of hope for the future, but with the help of God and the hard work of thousands of people in many and various ways, this time of great suffering became a time of great revelations.

(slide #5) Today when you walk along the sidewalk on the top of the Hoover Dam you can see the face of the dam and the Hydroelectric plant on one side and Lake Mead on the other side. It's hard to believe that you are at the nucleus of great power and productivity until you go through the tour of the Hydroelectric plant. (slide #6) It is so hard to understand the great suffering and depression of the people of that time went through unless you were there. (slide #7) It is also important to look at the world's lessons and learn from them so that we will have the strength to deal with our suffering and hold onto the hope that they give in times of need with the help of God.

(slide #8) America as a country has been blessed in many ways by God, throughout the years. We have been blessed to have God's Word as a part of the forming of our nation, that has given us many freedoms. At the same time that we hold onto those blessings of God, we also need to continue to learn from God's Word about times in other nations, built by God and His Word, so that we can keep God's blessing with us even in the midst of suffering. Today in our

Old Testament and psalms readings we are reminded of what we need to hold onto and what we will lose if we don't.

The book of Lamentation was written by the prophet Jeremiah who had warned the people of Judah that they were following the path of their relatives from Israel, who had abandoned God's Word and followed the ways of the world, which ended when God letting Israel be conquered by the Syrians. Jeremiah not only warned the nation of Judah of what was going to happen to them if they continued on the path they were going, but he was there when the Babylonians conquered Judah, burning and destroying the city of Jerusalem and the temple. (slide #9) The people of God who had for hundreds of years wrestled with God's Word had now abandoned God and His Word so God let them have what they wanted, their life without Him. It's not quite what they were hoping for or expected. The book of Lamentation is a series of laments, that Jeremiah shares with us, as the people of God are taken into captivity and he laments over what has happen to all that was good and right when God's people held onto their faith in God. (slide # 10)

In the midst of great suffering and pain often God is hidden like a great wall, a fortress. Jeremiah in his third lament says, **"I am the man who has seen affliction under the rod of God's wrath; <sup>2</sup> He has driven and brought me into darkness without any light; <sup>3</sup> surely against me He turns His hand again and again the whole day long."** (Lam. 3: 1-3) Luther reminds us that, "People who have given up on their faith have also given themselves over to thinking that God has forsaken them and is their enemy. They even lay the blame on other men or on the devil and have simply no confidence at all in God. For this reason, too, their suffering is always an offense to them and harmful. Yet they go on doing what they thing is good and right, quite unaware of their serious unbelief. Yet God looks upon each of us and does not forsake us. He stands here by our side ready to help in love, grace and mercy, through the window of dim faith He permits Himself to be seen." (slide # 11) Jeremiah says it this way, **"My soul continually remembers God's love and is bowed down within me. <sup>21</sup> But this I call to mind, and therefore I have hope:"** (Lam. 3:20 – 21) The people of God as they were being driven into exile wrote Psalm 137 and said this about their situation, (slide #12) **"By the waters of Misery there we sat down and wept, when we remembered God's promises. <sup>2</sup> On the willows there we hung up our lyres. <sup>3</sup> For there our captors required of us songs, and our tormentors, laughed, saying, "Sing us one of the songs of**

**your God!"** <sup>4</sup>How shall we sing the Lord's song in a foreign land? <sup>5</sup>If I forget You, O God of peace, let my right hand forget its skill! <sup>6</sup>Let my tongue stick to the roof of my mouth, if I do not remember You, if I do not set the God of peace above my highest joy!" (Ps. 137:1-6)

Luther reminds us that, "Those who in such suffering trust God and hold on to the good, firm confidence in Him, they come to believe that He is well-pleased with them, and they begin to see in their suffering and affliction as nothing but the pure and precious merits, the costliest treasures which no man can assess. For faith and confidence in God makes precious before God all that which others think most shameful." (AE 44:28)

(slide # 13) As we let God go to work in our lives we often find that in the midst of suffering and depression that the person that we have nailed to the cross is the one who is holding us in His loving arms. When we let our faith in God be of guiding light and not the ways of the world, we discover what Jeremiah did, (slide #14) **'The steadfast love of the Lord never ceases; His mercies never come to an end; <sup>23</sup>they are new every morning; great is your faithfulness.** <sup>24</sup>**"The Lord is my portion," says my soul, "therefore I will hope in Him."** (Lam. 3: 22 – 24)

In the midst of suffering and pain we all at times pull the shades down and don't let the light of God shine into our lives. But as we let the light of God rise in our lives we will find His faithfulness to us, even when we have been unfaithful to Him. Yes, God says to us through the words of Jeremiah, (slide #15) **"The Lord is good to those who wait for Him, to the soul who seeks Him.** (slide #16)<sup>26</sup>**It is good that one should wait quietly for the salvation of the Lord."** (Lam. 3:25-26)

Today as we quietly sit in the pews of this church, that God has so magnificently built for us here and as we receive the very body and blood of our Lord and Savior, Jesus Christ for the forgiveness of all our sins we are strengthened of our faith and we need to remember who is waiting to give us a great big hug at all time. (slide #17) The very one who came into this world of suffering and depression for us, to conquer all our sins, the power of death and the devil all for us so that we can be in His loving arms now and forever.

On the night that Jesus was betrayed, He gave His disciples a promise that He wants us to remember. After Jesus had washed their feet, given them the Lord's Supper, warned Peter of his denial and prepared them for His death He told them, (slide #18) **"In the world you will have tribulation. But take heart; I have overcome the world."** (Jn. 16:33)

As Sue came to visit her mother in the hospice center she had forgot those word that her mother had on a plaque above the sink in her kitchen, all her life. Oh, her mom had asked her to drop by the house and pick up the plaque for her and she had done that, but she had left it at home. The plaque was stained from all the years sitting above the sink but the words were still clear. When she apologized for not bringing the plaque, her mom said, "Don't worry about it, Susie. Those words are here, I carry them in my heart." Her mom patted Sue's hand as she recited the words of Jesus to her and then said, "Though my death is near, by God is nearer. I'm trusting in Jesus, the one who overcame death for me, for you and for all of us. God's faithfulness is great and it guides our lives with hope for the future, hold onto Him with all your might."

(slide #19) At the main entrance of the Hoover Dam there is what is called a celestial map. This map commemorates the day that President Roosevelt dedicated the dam. Rather than giving the date, it gives the configuration of the stars for that day. The designers of the dam though their project was so great and so daring that they needed to help future generations to locate its occurrence in time. There is truly only one occasion that all needs to be reminded of, the life, death and resurrection of Jesus Christ, for it is the most significant event of all.

This morning, God has given us the promise of His faithfulness. It can be read by the faithful Words of God, not by looking at the stars but by looking at a cross. (slide #20) There, outside the city of Jerusalem, God the Father condemned His Only Son to death that He might bear for us the sins of the entire world. Now, risen from the dead, Jesus Christ proclaims God's steadfast love to you and to all nations. God's faithfulness to His promise is great. It is great in its power to forgive you of all your sins. It is great in its extent, because it lasts from generation to generation and it guides our lives to hope in Christ return again. For then, He will bring about a new creation, where all those who believe in Him will live in the wonder of His great faithfulness and love forever. That's something worth remembering and sharing with other in our nation and all over the world. Amen.