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The Lord Delivers

Psalm 116

Series: Special Services – Post Hurricane Ian

October 9, 2022

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- I. “Everybody has a story”
- A. That’s the slogan that Jean and I very quickly realized that characterizes ministering here in this very special community
1. Everybody has a story
 2. We came here more than 9 years ago from a university community
 3. People would ask us, “What was it like, leaving a community filled with young people, with college students, and coming to a community like this?”
 - a. A community in which, even well into my 60's, many of you still call me “young man!”
 4. My answer then – and my answer now – is that you people are much more interesting than college students
 - a. The incredible range of life experiences vested in Shell Point and in the surrounding community far surpasses what college students bring to a community
 - b. College students are blank slates by comparison
 5. But the richness of life experiences is truly one of the great blessings we enjoy in ministry here
- B. One of the corollaries of the “everybody has a story” slogan, of the “richness of life experiences” which characterizes this community, is that I was led to conclude that no matter what experience might be imagined – somebody here at Shell Point has been through it
1. That at least collectively – you’ve seen it all
 - a. You’ve been through wars
 - b. You’ve been through recessions, some even depressions
 - c. You’ve endured political tsunamis
 - d. You’ve lived all over the world
 - e. You’ve seen it all
- C. But that notion was shattered on September 28th
1. Ian was a category 4, nearly a category 5 hurricane
 - a. And we sustained essentially a direct hit
 2. And it was positioned to produce the maximum amount of storm surge
 - a. Winds in excess of 135 mph here
 - b. 15 feet of water above an already high tide in some places
- D. Maybe there is someone in this community who has experienced such a storm
1. But if there is, they haven’t mentioned it to me

2. The nearly universal testimony is that none of us has ever been through anything quite like this
3. We've seen it all?
 - a. Maybe not
- E. So it was with astonishment that Jean and I watched from the windows in the Larsen Health Center where we were sheltering
 1. As cars in the parking lot were moving around by themselves
 2. As waves poured in from the Gulf across in front of the Springs
 3. As the waters rose to the roof tops of the mobile home park on Davis Rd.
 4. As parts of the aluminum flashing from the portocochere on the Larsen – a building built to withstand hurricanes – were ripped off, piece by piece
- F. Pastor Don didn't get to see that
 1. Their experience, I presume, in the garage shelter was not so much visual, but auditory
 2. Their visual experience took place when the storm passed and the windows were opened
 - a. When they saw massive banyan trees toppled
 - b. When they saw half of the aluminum roofing stripped off the church
 - c. When they saw that the cars of the staff which were on the first floor of the garage had been inundated with nearly 4 feet of water
 - d. When they saw that the trees from our paradise of perpetual summer were stripped of their leaves – giving an eery sense of a bleak northern winter
 3. They did see the cross and the steeple of the church still standing
 - a. Tilted slightly
 - b. A perpetual reminder, perhaps, of what we endured
- G. It was with a certain degree of fear when Jean and I were able to leave the Larsen to go and check on our home
 1. We were able to ascertain that traffic seemed to be able to move on Summerlin
 - a. Though McGregor seemed still to be flooded
 2. Thankfully, my truck started and appeared driveable
 - a. Though more than half the vehicles in the Larsen lot were not
 3. Our trip there, which usually takes less than 8 minutes, took nearly a half and hour
 - a. And the level of destruction – of businesses and whole communities – was breathtaking
 - b. And heartbreaking
 4. We had to take a circuitous route to even get into the neighborhood
 5. And based on what we saw on the way, we were bracing ourselves for what we would find when we got there
 - a. Would there even be a house
- H. Our emotions were raw and mixed on that excursion
 1. We found that our garage had flooded with 17 inches of water

- a. The water lines were quite evident
 - 2. But we also discovered that the water did not enter the main floor of the house
 - a. The water line was right up to the threshold of the front door
 - b. Right up to the threshold of the door from the garage steps
 - c. That if the garage had had 18 inches instead of 17 – we would have had an intrusion that would have had us looking for other accommodations
 - 3. So our hearts leaped with thanksgiving
 - I. But no sooner had we felt the relief, we were overcome by all those who were not so fortunate
 - 1. We had no water in our home
 - 2. Next door had water
 - 3. Across the street had water
 - 4. 250 Shell Point residents are displaced because they weren't so fortunate
 - J. And as difficult, and as inconvenient, as those dear folks are
 - 1. On our little excursion we passed hundreds more who lost everything
 - 2. Went to the pharmacy yesterday
 - a. Large man in front of me was being waited on
 - b. Pharmacist was filling his prescription; she asked, "Is this your address?"
 - c. "Not any more"
 - K. One of our congregation, responding to my email earlier this week, shared similar mixed feelings
 - 1. "As I was praying this morning all I could think of is how grateful I am and how blessed I am.
 - 2. "Two of the women who work here at the Springs have lost everything. One lived on Sanibel and the other in a trailer park on Davis Road opposite the golf course. It is not only the things they have lost but the relationships that will now end as friends and neighbors are moving away not to return."
 - L. How do you process emotions like that?
 - 1. How do you unpack a once-in-a-lifetime experience like that?
 - M. I turn to the Psalms
 - 1. In the Psalms we find the full range of emotions expressed
 - a. In the context of every kind of trial imaginable
 - 2. As we read them, meditate on them, and even personalize them
 - a. We find healing for our own souls
 - b. We find our prayers resonating with heaven
 - c. We find our perspective changing from our earth-bound human viewpoint to a God-centered, heavenly perspective
- II. Psalm 116
- A. Psalm 116 (ESV) —
 - 1. I love the LORD, because he has heard my voice and my pleas for mercy.

2. 2 Because he inclined his ear to me, therefore I will call on him as long as I live.
3. 3 The snares of death encompassed me; the pangs of Sheol laid hold on me; I suffered distress and anguish.
4. 4 Then I called on the name of the LORD: “O LORD, I pray, deliver my soul!”
5. 5 Gracious is the LORD, and righteous; our God is merciful.
6. 6 The LORD preserves the simple; when I was brought low, he saved me.
7. 7 Return, O my soul, to your rest; for the LORD has dealt bountifully with you.
8. 8 For you have delivered my soul from death, my eyes from tears, my feet from stumbling;
9. 9 I will walk before the LORD in the land of the living.
10. 10 I believed, even when I spoke: “I am greatly afflicted”;
11. 11 I said in my alarm, “All mankind are liars.”
12. 12 What shall I render to the LORD for all his benefits to me?
13. 13 I will lift up the cup of salvation and call on the name of the LORD,
14. 14 I will pay my vows to the LORD in the presence of all his people.
15. 15 Precious in the sight of the LORD is the death of his saints.
16. 16 O LORD, I am your servant; I am your servant, the son of your maidservant. You have loosed my bonds.
17. 17 I will offer to you the sacrifice of thanksgiving and call on the name of the LORD.
18. 18 I will pay my vows to the LORD in the presence of all his people,
19. 19 in the courts of the house of the LORD, in your midst, O Jerusalem. Praise the LORD!

III. Call on the Lord!

- A. When we are helpless – call on the Lord!
 1. And when we are watching, sheltered as we were, the sheer power of the storm, it is evident that we are helpless before Almighty God
- B. But this psalm, we are encouraged to call on the Lord in our helpless estate
 1. Four times we read “I will call” or “I called”
 2. Psalm 116:2 (ESV) — 2 “Because he inclined his ear to me, therefore I will call on him as long as I live.”
 3. Psalm 116:4 (ESV) — 4 Then I called on the name of the LORD: “O LORD, I pray, deliver my soul!”
 4. Psalm 116:13 (ESV) — 13 “I will lift up the cup of salvation and call on the name of the LORD...”
 5. Psalm 116:17 (ESV) — 17 “I will offer to you the sacrifice of thanksgiving and call on the name of the LORD.”

IV. Make it Personal

- A. There is a running debate among worship circles these days about whether our expressions should be God-centered, or whether there is a place for individual, personal expressions in our worship
 1. Our age, especially in America, is self-oriented, psychologically driven,

- individualistic, even narcissistic
 - 2. My impulse, as a pastor and shepherd, is to eschew individualistic worship in favor of God-centered, corporate expressions
 - B. But I have to say that this psalm (along with a number of others) demonstrate that there is no final contradiction between God-centered worship and personal expressions of worship
 - 1. “I” occurs 18 times in this psalm
 - a. “My” 9 times
 - b. “Me” 7 times
 - 2. “I,” “my” or “me” occurs in every verse except two
 - 3. Psalm 116:1–2 (ESV) — 1 I love the LORD, because he has heard my voice and my pleas for mercy. 2 Because he inclined his ear to me, therefore I will call on him as long as I live.
 - C. Don’t be afraid to pour our your soul to God
 - 1. Don’t be afraid to come to God as if you were the only one listening to you
 - a. With undivided attention
 - D. Be personal when you call on God
- V. Know the God to Whom You Call
 - A. This is the God-centered side of this psalm
 - 1. The psalmist knows the God he calls on
 - B. I was doing some work around the house the other day
 - 1. Talked to the contractor who was doing some work on the house next door
 - 2. He was telling me his story – where he was during the storm, that sort of thing
 - 3. He said, “And I talked to God... now I don’t normally talk to God”
 - 4. Didn’t think it was the time or place to preach
 - a. But I thought – maybe he ought talk to God more often
 - b. Maybe he ought to get to know the Man
 - c. If he knew God better, maybe he’d talk to Him more often
 - C. But the psalmist knew God
 - 1. Psalm 116:5–6 (ESV) — 5 Gracious is the LORD, and righteous; our God is merciful. 6 The LORD preserves the simple...
 - D. Did you learn something about God from this storm?
 - 1. Did you get a sense of His power?
 - 2. Did you discover His mercy?
 - a. Do you realize how vulnerable this community is, with its proximity to the Gulf and the river?
 - b. Do you realize how easy it would have been for God to have completely eradicated this place?
 - 3. Did you not gain a sense of His grace?
 - a. Why did He spare us?
 - b. Why did He spare me?
 - E. Don’t let an experience like this pass without discovering the God who preserves the simple
 - 1. Know the God on whom you call

VI. Know the Eternal God

- A. An experience like this shows us how finite we are
 - 1. How mortal we all are
 - 2. Isaiah 40:6–7 (ESV) — 6 A voice says, “Cry!” And I said, “What shall I cry?” All flesh is grass, and all its beauty is like the flower of the field. 7 The grass withers, the flower fades when the breath of the LORD blows on it; surely the people are grass.
- B. But the eternal God delivers
 - 1. And that gives the psalmist great confidence in God
- C. Past
 - 1. Psalm 116:3–4 (ESV) — 3 The snares of death encompassed me; the pangs of Sheol laid hold on me; I suffered distress and anguish. 4 Then I called on the name of the LORD: “O LORD, I pray, deliver my soul!”
 - 2. God delivered him from some malady, some illness, some affliction – we know not what – it doesn’t matter
 - a. In the past
- D. Present
 - 1. Psalm 116:8–9 (ESV) — 8 For you have delivered my soul from death, my eyes from tears, my feet from stumbling; 9 I will walk before the LORD in the land of the living.
 - 2. I’m going to trust God now for His deliverance
- E. Future
 - 1. Psalm 116:12–14 (ESV) — 12 What shall I render to the LORD for all his benefits to me? 13 I will lift up the cup of salvation and call on the name of the LORD, 14 I will pay my vows to the LORD in the presence of all his people.
- F. God delivered him in the past
 - 1. He is trusting God to deliver him in the present
 - 2. He will continue to trust God to deliver him in the future
- G. Why?
 - 1. Because God is unchanging
 - a. Jesus Christ is the same yesterday, today and forever!
 - b. God is the eternal God
 - 2. His delivering you is rooted in His character and nature
 - a. He is eternal and unchanging
 - 3. Know the God who is eternal
 - a. That’s the only One to call on

VII. Give God His Due

- A. This is one of the most remarkable insights that we can gain from this psalm
 - 1. Psalm 116:12 (ESV) — 12 What shall I render to the LORD for all his benefits to me?
- B. What shall I give God for all He has given to me?
 - 1. How much to I owe God?
 - 2. What should I write on my check for services rendered?
 - 3. How much work must I do to balance my account with God?

- C. That's our impulse, isn't it?
 - 1. It's what John Piper calls "the debtor's ethic"
 - a. God does something for us
 - b. We need to pay Him back
 - 2. People do it all the time – try to make deals with God
 - a. "God, if you get me out of this fix, I'll turn my life around... I'll give more to the church... I'll volunteer in the community... I'll be nice to my kids for a change"
 - 3. The psalmist understands the impulse
 - a. "What shall I render to the Lord for all his benefits to me?"
- D. But this is where the psalmist gets off
 - 1. He drops the debtor's ethic like a hot potato
 - 2. Psalm 116:12–13 (ESV) — 12 What shall I render to the LORD for all his benefits to me? 13 I will lift up the cup of salvation and call on the name of the LORD...
 - 3. In other words, "I called on Him and He delivered me..."
 - a. "What shall I do for Him in return?"
 - b. "I know – I'll call on Him again!"
 - 4. "I'll lift up the cup of salvation and call on Him again..."
 - a. "And again... and again..."
- E. That's what God wants
 - 1. God wants us to call on Him again
 - a. And again
 - b. And again!
 - 2. That's what you can do for God
 - a. Because you can't begin to pay Him back
 - b. He owns the cattle on a thousand hills
 - c. He owns you!
 - d. He's given you everything you could give to Him!
 - 3. What He wants from you is for you keep calling on Him
- F. And when you do, do it with a sacrifice
 - 1. Oh, here we go – a sacrifice
 - a. God expects a sacrifice
 - 2. But it's not what you think
 - a. Not even what an OT Jew would think
 - b. Not a sacrifice of an animal
 - c. Not even an act of penance
- G. Psalm 116:17 (ESV) — 17 I will offer to you the sacrifice of thanksgiving and call on the name of the LORD.
 - 1. The sacrifice God wants is not a bull or a goat
 - a. Or certainly not an act of penance
 - 2. He wants your worship
 - a. He wants your sacrifice of thanksgiving
 - 3. And then He wants you to call on Him again
- H. Psalm 116:12–14 (ESV) — 12 What shall I render to the LORD for all his

benefits to me? 13 I will lift up the cup of salvation and call on the name of the LORD, 14 I will pay my vows to the LORD in the presence of all his people.

- I. Psalm 116:17–18 (ESV) — 17 I will offer to you the sacrifice of thanksgiving and call on the name of the LORD. 18 I will pay my vows to the LORD in the presence of all his people,
 - J. Pay my vows...
 - 1. Lift up the cup of salvation
 - 2. Call on the name of the Lord
 - 3. Offer the sacrifice of thanksgiving
 - K. And do it all in the presence of His people
 - 1. In the presence of the church
- VIII. One final word
- A. There is one little verse in this psalm – almost seems a bit out of place, like it doesn't belong
 - 1. But the verse itself is consistent with the deep love and affection God has for His people
 - 2. It expresses the tenderness of our Great Shepherd
 - 3. And so expresses the heart of God so integral to this psalm
 - B. Psalm 116:15 (ESV) — 15 Precious in the sight of the LORD is the death of his saints.
 - 1. One of the most cherished moments for God, one of the moments of God's deepest treasures, one of God's greatest pleasures
 - a. Is when He calls one of His children home to Himself
 - 2. Precious in the sight of the Lord is the death of his saints
 - C. Sometimes people don't survive the trial
 - 1. Sometimes people don't live through the ordeal
 - 2. Sometimes people don't make it through the tragedy
 - 3. That's true with believers
 - D. Sometimes God uses the trial or ordeal or affliction to call His own people home
 - 1. But when He does – it's a precious moment for God
 - 2. If it's a precious moment for God – just think how precious it is for His child when he or she finds himself or herself in His presence
 - E. People died in Ian
 - 1. Some of the people who died were believers
 - a. God used this terrible storm to call His own home
 - 2. And when He did, it was precious
 - F. We don't like that
 - 1. We're more concerned with how we die
 - a. Rather than in what condition we die
 - b. In what spiritual condition we die
 - 2. We concerned with whether we die by heart attack, or stroke, or cancer, or drowning, or accident
 - a. There are a multitude of ways to die
 - 3. But biblically there are only two ways to die
 - a. We either die in faith – believing in Jesus Christ alone for our

- salvation
 - b. Or we die in our sins
 - G. If we die in faith
 - 1. Believing, trusting in the person and work of Christ alone
 - 2. Whether it is by heart attack, drowning, accident, whatever
 - 3. If we die in faith – we are His saints
 - 4. And it is precious to God
 - H. Psalm 116:15 (ESV) — 15 Precious in the sight of the LORD is the death of his saints.
- IX. The Lord Delivers
 - A. He's delivered in the past
 - 1. He's delivered us in the present – He has spared our community
 - 2. He'll deliver us in the future
 - B. He delivers those helpless creatures who call on Him
 - 1. Who call on the gracious, righteous and merciful God
 - 2. Who call on Him personally
 - C. He delivers those who love to call on Him again
 - 1. And who offer the sacrifice of thanksgiving
- X. Benediction – Whenever Waves Around Me Roll

Whenever waves around me roll in nature or within my soul.
 When things are hard to understand, I place my life within God's hand.
 With confidence I'll trust His plan, however wide and long its span.
 With patience and with quietness I'll trust in God's great faithfulness.

When facing what is yet unknown, when feeling fearful or alone,
 I will remember Jesus cares, and all my burdens Jesus shares.
 I'll put my troubled mind at rest; I know my Shepherd knows what's best.
 I am His own and He will keep, and guard me, His beloved sheep.

Then I will face life's troubled time with peace and with a quiet mind,
 And face the unknown without fear, knowing that God Himself is near.
 And even if the way be dim, still I will fully trust in Him.
 My song of hope shall ever be: I know the One who cares for me.

I will be still for God the Lord will be exalted in the world;
 I will rejoice and I will sing for all the joy salvation brings.
 The Lord of hosts is with us still and He will work His sovereign will.
 His rod and staff will comfort bring, therefore my soul can ever sing.

TEXT: Patricia Dys

SCRIPTURE REFEREMCES: Psalms 46:1-11; Habakkuk 3:17-18; Psalms 23:4

MUSIC: Higher Ground, L.M. with refrain

Charles H. Gabriel

(I'm Pressing on the Upward Way)