



Kirknewton and East Calder Parish Church of Scotland

Scottish Charity No. SC006973

Reading Psalm 13.

Sermon: 12 July 2009

The text for the sermon verse 1:

*How long, O LORD? Will you forget me forever?
How long will you hide your face from me? ¹*

Beloved in the Lord

Once upon a time when there was a girl who had a lovely rose garden. Every morning she went into the garden to pick some roses to brighten someone else's day with. But every day she would moan and complain because the thorns didn't make her task easy. One day she wished that the roses could not have thorns anymore. Her wish was granted and she was very happy.

But to her big surprise she realized all the roses were also gone! Then it dawned upon her. Thorns are there for a reason. Roses smell so sweet and are so colourful; it is easy to imagine that a lot of insects would also think roses are the ideal meal. Thorns are there to keep the unwanted insects away!

The same is true of our own lives. There are things in life that we enjoy but also other things that makes us sad or let us cry out in despair: How long God? Almost like David who echoes this sentence 4 times in Psalm 13.

We do not know the exact reason for David's despair or sorrow. However it is evident that he is surrounded by foes. Then fact that he does not pray for the destruction of his enemies fits either the Saul or the Absalom situations.

To David it feels as if God has deserted him. He is totally alone. He cries out to the Lord in his darkest moment because he is shaken. The Hebrew word suggests a stronger meaning namely to loose one's roots. David is so full of despair that he is on the brink n of loosing himself mentally. But in his darkest moment he realizes it is only God that can help and save him. He says to God: "Bring me to life again" Enlighten my eyes. He is actually asking God to help him see the bigger picture.

¹ *The Holy Bible : New International Version*. Grand Rapids : Zondervan, 1996, c1984, S. Ps 13:1

He concludes his cry to God with a vote of confidence. He found the faith and the hope and the trust he needed in God's steadfast love or as it says in the Hebrew text: "in God's "chesed" (faithfulness). He experiences the wonderful feeling that he is not alone and without God's love and presence and mercy. He can still sing because God brought him back to face life again. He was on a spiritual rollercoaster – a journey of despair to glorious joy!

What does the Psalm mean for us today?

I think we are also just like David and the little girl who wished for the thorns to disappear. Sometimes bad things do happen to us. We or our loved ones get sick, we die, we lose our jobs, and we see horrible things happen to us and in our world.

We feel at times as if God is not in control anymore. Then we despair and cry out. Others do not even bother to go to God anymore.

When bad things happen we tend to be so taken by it that we lose focus and perspective. We want the roses without the thorns. We cry so much that we are blinded by our tears not to see any good. We look down instead of looking up or sideways to seek God's Holy presence.

Maybe the solution will be to handle the bad things like David did namely:

- To pray and look around for the good;
- To pray and seek God's presence;
- To hold on to faith that looks beyond circumstances;
- To realize that God has a reason for everything that happens although we might not agree or understand;
- To trust God's love and goodness and mercy

Maybe it is also time to realise what faith and trusting can really mean in our lives especially when we despair and cry out to God.

Faith can turn adversity into assurance, battles into blessings, chaos into courage, despair into deliverance, emptiness into encouragement, grief into gladness, hopelessness into happiness, pain into peace, remorse into rejoicing, sadness into singing and tears into triumph! We must hold on to the faith that we received when Jesus Christ revealed himself to us – the faith that He daily sustains through his Holy Spirit.

May we always remember that we do not know the answer to suffering, despair, and pain? However, we do know what to do when bad things happen to us. We can be like David in going to the one and only God to find hope and peace. Or we can be like the wee girl in the story - going through life wishing the bad things to disappear to find out time and time again that the roses are gone too!

Amen