

## **Disillusionment and Dissolution; Hope and Health based on 2Peter 3:3-15, David Jahnke, 12/7/14**

We just ended a series on Paul's first letter to the Thessalonians which is the earliest Christian writing. 2Peter is probably the latest Christian writing in scripture. So the expectation of Jesus' return is still present but has been tempered by time. People by this point are scoffing at the idea of Jesus' return and the author explains that a thousand years is but a day to the Lord. So even by this old standard, only two days have passed since the Lord's first coming. And according to modern theology and science you could easily say that a million or even a billion years are but a day to the Lord.

Things often do not happen according to our timetables so it is so easy to get disillusioned. At these times, it can be helpful to remember that God's time and God's mind and His Way are so different from ours.

This is a theme in Job and Ecclesiastes which were revisionist in their understanding of the traditional wisdom. Seth and I have been reading Job which is fascinating to read with an 11-year old. At the beginning you have God's conversation with Satan; most of the book is filled with Job's friends scoffing at him and insisting that his own sin must be behind the suffering and Job defending himself. Job demands for a trial before God and God's coming in the end in a whirlwind. It is great stuff and so well-written. And one of the main themes is that we cannot know the mind of God.

But if ever there was someone who might have become disillusioned! After all of Job's property was stolen or destroyed and his children killed and Job struck with a skin disease, his own wife suggested that he curse God and die. But Job refuses to do so. Listen to his cry of hope:

19:23 "Oh, that my words were recorded, that they were written on a scroll, [*How wonderful for us that they were!*] 24 if only these words were engraved in rock forever! 25 I know that my redeemer lives, and that in the end he will stand on the earth. 26 And after my skin has been destroyed, yet in my flesh I will see God; 27 I myself will see him with my own eyes. How my heart yearns within me for that day!"

Job's hope is ours as well. The difference is we are on this side of our redeemer standing on the earth. And our redeemer revealed that His Father loved all his children—the sinful and the self-righteous like Job's friends too-- and he showed them that there was nothing to get disillusioned about, other than the illusion of sin and death's final victory. He drove away that illusion through his

love and teachings and feedings and healings; through his resurrecting the dead and his own resurrection.

These are the things that our hearts yearn for. And we long for them because they are already in our heart. The most disillusioned writer in the Bible—the writer of Ecclesiastes who had much affinity with Job’s author—he wrote that, “God has also set eternity in the human heart; yet no one can fathom what God has done from beginning to end.”

So our hearts intuitively sense the Kingdom...and our intuition is confirmed in the life of Jesus. But since the Kingdom has not been consummated, we long for it. And that longing can do one of two things: it can either drive us to a hope that springs eternal and drives away sin and death or we can let Satan and sin and death squash our longing as nothing but an illusion. But such dis-illusion hastens dis-solution. The disintegration and dissolving that 2Peter says comes to all things because they are impure and thus perishable world.

We have seen more and more of this in both the African-American community and policing communities.

I heard on the radio yesterday morning a black therapist who responded to a woman who said she felt overwhelmed by the disparity in economic and social opportunity between whites and blacks and poor and rich and how young male blacks’ lives are getting ruined by crime and imprisonment and having no luck finding work after getting out. The doctor said this feeling of being overwhelmed was common and then said quite poignantly that this disillusionment often immobilizes people, and keeps them from working for their own liberation.

The same goes for us as we let perceived or real injustice get us down and lead us to unhealthy behaviors.

When we persist and grow in believing that the darkness will never overcome the light within, then the power of God moves us and the world around us forward. We see this in the peaceful protests.

Police who work in dangerous neighborhoods get disillusioned as well due to the lack of respect and appreciation for the good work that they do and the lack of progress. And that disillusionment can make them cold and bitter and vulnerable to errors in judgment. The same goes for us too when we are not appreciated or respected or do not see progress in those around us.

I want to point to just a symbolic ray of hope. Have any of you seen the pictures going around of hugs between black protestors and the police officers

watching over them? These symbolize the healing that is needed through continued dialog and a renewal of mutual respect under the rule of God's law and love.

This will require tremendous patience. The kind of patience that comes from remembering God's patience with us which 2 Peter says is another reason God is putting off his final judgment. "The Lord does not want any to perish, but all to come to repentance."

This week here at the church was an example of potential disillusionment blossoming instead into new life. We go through all of this wonderful work in the sanctuary to prepare for this season of worship and for concerts like tonight's and to make things right for our new tenant who have been cold in the evenings for a couple of weeks and we were not sure why. Sure enough the boiler is done for. We could have easily become stressed and flustered and angry and afraid. But instead, we pulled together and prayed and trusted that the Lord was over all of this and would resolve it. And God did, and now a couple hundred more people will be able to experience this wonderful event. And who knows the saving grace God might bring to them because of this?

That is what God's timing and God's patience does for the world— it gives us all time to see and hear the glory of the Lord being sung around us— even if seen through a glass dimly lit and heard through jars of clay.

And since our vision is clouded— and yet the Lord wants none to perish and all to repent-- to turn back to him, will not the Lord fully reveal himself and give people the chance to turn and choose life over death? Isaiah points to this when he says, "Then the glory of the LORD shall be revealed, and all people shall see it together, for the mouth of t-he LORD has spoken."

When Isaiah said this, the Israelites were in exile in Babylon. Isaiah knew that a messiah-- one anointed by God was coming. And indeed, out of the Gentile land or Persia came the one who would free them from exile and send them home once again through the wilderness.

I was talking with my friend the other day who is in a waiting period. He and the church dissolved their relationship which is the official language our tradition uses for the end of a pastoral relationship— dissolution. He had been at a church for seven years and while the church had its ups and downs over his years there, I was quite surprised to find this out a couple of months ago. And like so many in this economy, he had to look for work where he could find it and was blessed with a teaching position.

We spoke this week and he said that while he felt fortunate and blessed, he also felt like he was in a kind of exile. But that all the signs from his reading scripture to praying and even strangers walking up to him and telling him that God had a special plan in mind for him— and regular Joe and Jill type people— his sense was that the exile was coming to an end. And this hope fills his spirit and presses him forward in his new work.

And the same goes for us. The exile will soon be over— especially when we remember God’s time and how our lives are but dust in the wind.

The exile of another acquaintance ended differently. The son of a seminary professor of mine chose death over life this last week. He came on a trip to Turkey with us in 2002 and was an interesting character even then—17 years old with a beard already and baggy pants and scraggly hair and “the ability to fix anything” according to a mutual friend of ours. Well he could not fix his own soul and disillusionment won.

The Lord does not want us to perish but the result of sin is that we are left with perishable bodies. And whether the devil overwhelms and kills us or others suddenly—as Martin Luther said happens with suicides— or sin and perishability do so gradually, may we trust, like Job, that our redeemer lives; that he has stood on the earth and he will do so again. And everyone will see God face to face like Job, and find there a loving Father. May they then turn and run into his loving arms.

And may we do all that we can to be the face of Christ Jesus to others so that they might get a glimpse of the love and the glory that awaits them. To the God of all grace who calls us to eternal union...