

Ps 65:1-13

L: Silence is praise to you, Zion-dwelling God, and also obedience.

P: You hear the prayer in it all.

L: We all arrive at your doorstep sooner or later, loaded with guilt,

P: Our sins too much for us—but you get rid of them once and for all.

L: So that we may begin this worship serve with a right heart, mind, and spirit- let us get rid of the sin and guilt that have collected within us by silently sharing what weighs us down with God.

L: Oh, visit the earth; ask her to join the dance!

P: Deck her out in spring showers, fill the God-River with living water.

L: Paint the wheat fields golden. Creation was made for this!

P: Drench the plowed fields; soak the dirt clods with rainfall as harrow and rake bring her to blossom and fruit.

L: Snow-crown the peaks with splendor, scatter rose petals down your paths, all through the wild meadows, rose petals.

P: Set the hills to dancing, dress the canyon walls with live sheep, a drape of flax across the valleys.

ALL: Let them shout, and shout, and shout! Oh, oh, let them sing!

Last week's message was focusing on change. How Saul with God's help changed his thoughts and understanding so he could be part of God's plan. We also reflected on how God is holding back the end time to give people an opportunity to hear Jesus's call= to turn to him so they can be changed from lost to found-having HOPE for today and eternity.

I mentioned that we have a part in this as well- for it's with the HS's guidance that we can prepare the way for Christ to enter into people's hearts & lives. And by doing this, we will be following in the footsteps of those who did this for us – helping us to be fertile ground so the Holy Spirit could transform us into believers and followers.

When I read Ps 65:9-13, I pictured a glory filled transformation of the earth that the psalmist rejoiced in seeing. He rejoiced that God watered the earth and made it fertile, but God didn't stop there- God made the grain grow.

God did this by softening the soil and breaking up any clumps of dirt giving the seeds a chance to sprout and grow unrestricted. Even the hills covered with grass were happy- the pastures full of flocks and grain caused everything to shout and sing with joy!

I believe we can feel a sense of this after all the rain we had this past week. I sat outside on Wednesday morning and heard a huge variety of birds singing= and saw that my plants seemed to have grown a few inches- then closing my eyes- I felt I could hear everything rejoicing.

The Jews believed that nature helps us understand something of God's character & that God's abundance seen in nature was a sign of God's love for them- showing God's generosity in giving more than they need or deserve.

Where this psalmist asked God to visit the earth—we know that God DID come and has asked us to join in the Divine Dance. As God fills us with living water- it not only produces a beauty from within for ALL to see, it helps us to get soaked so IF we've become like clumps of dirt- we can remove what binds us - able to be tilled so we can- not only bear fruit- but we will be able to fulfill our purpose in God's plan.

And fulfilling God's purpose is important. Why? B/C I have found that a life without purpose causes us to WILT or dry up, but when we allow God's rain to fill us with living water- our NEED to fulfill our purpose gets revitalized & grows as we witness God's plan unfold like a blooming flower.

The psalm also shows us that people had a purpose. There were plowed fields- workers had to plow and rake –basically prepare the fields. This helped the grain to emerge with ease. We need to be the workers-

assuring that ALL that God created is well cared for. We're to care for God's gift of the earth and all that is in it. And we're called to care for God's people in here and out there.

And one way we can begin to care for God's people is by taking what Paul told the Colossian church in chap. 2:11-17 seriously.

In this new life, it doesn't matter if you are a Jew or a Gentile, circumcised or uncircumcised, barbaric, uncivilized, slave, or free. Christ is all that matters, and he lives in all of us. So, chosen by God for this new life of love, dress in the wardrobe God picked out for you: compassion, kindness, humility, quiet strength, discipline. Be even-tempered, content with second place, quick to forgive an offense. Forgive as quickly and completely as the Master forgave you. And regardless of what else you put on, wear love. It's your basic, all-purpose garment. Never be without it. Let the peace of Christ keep you in tune with each other, in step with each other. None of this going off and doing your own thing. And cultivate thankfulness. Let the Word of Christ—have the run of the house. Give it plenty of room in your lives. Instruct and direct one another using good common sense. And sing; sing your hearts out to God! Let every detail in your lives—words, actions, whatever—be done in the name of the Master, Jesus, thanking God the Father every step of the way.

Although we're examples in God's house of those who have been given salvation & ARE chosen to be the hands & heart of Christ, we do need to be mindful that healthy churches are STILL made up of imperfect people. To think otherwise, is to misunderstand the mission of the church. Only when we're broken and emptied of our own self-sufficiency will we value and embrace other imperfect and broken people. Making the body of Christ a community that is needed by everyone!

In knowing this, we within the church—who are being changed or transformed B/C of Christ, can no longer wear whatever we want, instead we're to wear the clothes that God has picked out for us.

What are we to wear so that ALL may see them? Compassion, kindness, humility, quiet strength, being even tempered and quick to forgive others. However the garment that people NEED to see most - is LOVE.

For people to see love -we must show love. But there is something else we need to do. The passage also tells us—"Let the peace of Christ keep you in tune with each other." Moving cohesively with each other And although Paul's advice needs to be remembered here amongst us so we can work more effectively together- We're to use Christ's peace to help us to be in tune with and love the variety of people outside of here.

And the only way we can be in tune with people IS by remembering what it felt like to be broken, imperfect, and lost people. For when we remember, is when we can be open to not only excepting everyone, but empathizing so we can walk with them helping them to see how much they're loved by God and us.

Can you remember a time when you felt broken? It's not hard to feel this way B/C there are so many situations that can cause us to feel broken inside. This reality is WHAT makes this feeling a common denominator for ALL people-inside and outside of the church.

The reason FOR this feeling may be different, but the unpleasant feeling is the same. So who better to help someone who feels broken- then those who have felt this way, but have learned to seek & accept healing from Christ? And B/C we understand, remembering gives us the ability to genuinely welcome ALL people.

Why have I been stressing this? B/C as I've been sharing for the last several months that I believe that God has drenched this- his fields here with HIS living water- causing a bumper crop of people seeking something MORE than what the world offers them. And Christ is expecting US to help in the fields by preparing & raking the soil – making it EASIER for people to know & have a relationship with the Triune God.

Helping them to know they can feel different when they believe that Jesus took away their sin- unbinding them so they're free and helping them to live a life- knowing that no matter WHAT is happening in it- they aren't

alone- God IS with them, but also knowing that God has led them to be a part of a community- a family of believers that can help and walk with them.

I believe there are many out there that God HAS touched, who have been stirred to want to & desperately NEED to know all THIS- and B/C they do, they just may be eager to see Christians as they travel the byways around here= hoping to engage in a conversation with one-a conversation that just may save their lives or at least make life better.

We have an opportunity that if we make ourselves available out there-willing to engage in conversation- admitting that we're imperfect- we will be able to make a difference IN people's lives by helping people to see the difference that Biblical thinking CAN make in the disappointments, challenges, insecurities, worries and EVEN in the rifts within our relationships.

From the beginning, our Lord showed concern for those who stumbled, & acceptance for those who weren't perfect or living as OTHERS thought they should live. Meaning that we need to be careful to NOT exclude or make people who we think may NOT fit in- uncomfortable.

There was a church-where the members all got dressed up-each service was well programed and everyone fell into their proper place.

One day a young man from a nearby college came in late- he wore shorts-had long hair and looked scruffy. The ushers had already sat down-so this young man walked up the center aisle looking for a seat- no one moved over for him-so he sat on the floor up at the front- you heard an audible gasp-people stopped singing the opening hymn-the accompanist lost his place in the music-the murmurs began. Philip-an older Deacon in the church-dressed in his Sunday best- walked up towards the young man- and as he did- you could hear-the delight in people's voices as they commented – that Philip would take care of 'this' situation. And Philip did -I'm sure you can guess what happened next. With a few grunts and groans-he sat on the floor next to the young man- stretched out his hand, shook the man's hand -as he introduced himself- saying welcome to our service. Philip stayed there until the service was over- as the young man helped Philip up=Philip invited him for coffee.

In Colossians vs. 11 Paul reminded those in the church that Jesus moved to erase all beliefs and knocked down barriers that caused divisions – so that ALL people were welcome. I find that when someone feels welcomed, it helps them to STOP wandering aimlessly through life, BUT feeling welcomed in church-helps people FILL that empty feeling within them-when they know HOW MUCH God REALLY does love them-calling them HIS beloved.

Christ has given his church the responsibility of spreading his message of saving grace throughout our communities and the world. Christ has empowered and equipped US -his body- to provide loving support to EVERY person who is seeking to learn more, to be a part of something bigger than themselves-yearning to fill what feel's empty. When we realize that we're all inter-dependent on one another, we will understand that not only do people need the church, but we need people- not to increase our statistical #'s - but to fill in those areas where the gifts they possess can make US better and well rounded!

But there's more. As people join us here- it will produce more workers to prepare God's fields so others can be drenched by God's living water and the circle of life with God can continue growing- doing our part to help God change people from lost to found. The sooner we realize this, the closer we will be to being the church that Jesus intended.

The church where people can finally find what feels right, so the scales can fall away from their eyes- enabling them to see the truth of the triune God-able to be set free from the ties that bind them- giving them hope & for their time on earth and beyond. People of the way let us ALWAYS work at being the church Jesus hopes that we WILL be!