**November 28, 2021 Psalm 25:1-10**

***Hope***

**Scripture:** *Psalms 25:1-10 NRSV*

*(1)To you, O LORD, I lift up my soul. (2)O my God, in you I trust; do not let me be put to shame; do not let my enemies exult over me. (3)Do not let those who wait for you be put to shame; let them be ashamed who are wantonly treacherous. (4)Make me to know your ways, O LORD; teach me your paths. (5)Lead me in your truth, and teach me, for you are the God of my salvation; for you I wait all day long. (6)Be mindful of your mercy, O LORD, and of your steadfast love, for they have been from of old. (7)Do not remember the sins of my youth or my transgressions; according to your steadfast love remember me, for your goodness' sake, O LORD! (8)Good and upright is the LORD; therefore he instructs sinners in the way. (9)He leads the humble in what is right, and teaches the humble his way. (10)All the paths of the LORD are steadfast love and faithfulness, for those who keep his covenant and his decrees.*

**Notes:**

1. There is ***HOPE*** in surrender.
   1. Hope is ***faith*** that what is good and right will prevail.
   2. Surrender is the beginning of our ***hope***.
   3. When we surrender to God, we find He is ***trustworthy***.
2. Surrender leads to ***FORMATION***
   1. We are transformed into someone who ***reflects*** God.
   2. People who follow God are people of ***justice***.
   3. The “***good*** ***life***” is about being hospitable to others.
   4. God is known as one surrenders and is ***transformed***.
3. God continues today to prove ***WORTHY*** of our hope.
   1. The Lord does ***good*** and ***right*** thing even if we don’t.
   2. The psalm emphasizes ***repentance***.
   3. The ***compassion*** of God extends to all who are willing.
   4. We can place our hope in God because God is ***continually*** faithful.
4. Formation leads to ***ACTION***.
   1. Hope is ***active***, not passive.
   2. One of the symbols of Advent is the lighting of the ***Advent*** ***candles***,
   3. we ***carry*** the light of Christ with us into the world
5. We light a candle today. as symbol of ***hope***.
   1. ***Hope*** is not just for us; it’s for the world.
   2. Carry the light of Christ—the light of ***hope***—into a dark world.

**Script:**

The first Sunday of Advent is the new year for the church. Around this time of year, we often see people talking of the hardships of the year gone by, and the longing for something new, something different. Often this journey toward the promise of hope feels long and daunting. It is filled with obstacles, with unmet expectations, with darkness and despair.

While we longed for this year of 2021 to come after the hard year of 2020, there are many of us who were still experiencing hardship, heartache, and darkness. The sting of despair and death still lingered it didn’t come to an end just because the year did.

So here we are, once again preparing to begin a new year, once again reminded that we still live in a broken world that feels, to many of us, beyond hope and repair. We come here again, to a week surrounded with the word “hope” in the midst of seeming hopelessness. We come here toa these words of a psalmist, named David. Join with me as we share in the reading of our sermon passage for today, Psalm 25:1-10.

***(1)To you, O LORD, I lift up my soul. (2)O my God, in you I trust; do not let me be put to shame; do not let my enemies exult over me. (3)Do not let those who wait for you be put to shame; let them be ashamed who are wantonly treacherous. (4)Make me to know your ways, O LORD; teach me your paths. (5)Lead me in your truth, and teach me, for you are the God of my salvation; for you I wait all day long. (6)Be mindful of your mercy, O LORD, and of your steadfast love, for they have been from of old. (7)Do not remember the sins of my youth or my transgressions; according to your steadfast love remember me, for your goodness' sake, O LORD! (8)Good and upright is the LORD; therefore he instructs sinners in the way. (9)He leads the humble in what is right, and teaches the humble his way. (10)All the paths of the LORD are steadfast love and faithfulness, for those who keep his covenant and his decrees. Psalms 25:1-10 NRSV***

I would like you to focus on several lines in this Psalm. Beginning in verse 4 “make your ways known to me, Lord; teach me your paths. Lead me in your truth—teach it to me—because you are the God who saves me. I put my hope in you all day long.” We read these words of promise, of trust, and of hope, a reminder of who God is—trustworthy and faithful—but also a reminder of who we are: a people of hope even in the midst of despair.

This specific psalm is designed as an acrostic poem, so it is meant to be read in its entirety even if the lectionary has us focusing on the first ten verses. We lose the acrostic in the English translation, but there is a pattern to this poem, and where it begins is important because it sets the tone for the entire poem. The poem begins with a declaration of surrender and trust toward the Lord: “I offer my life to you” in the CEB version. The NIV translates this first verse as “In you, Lord my God, I put my trust.” This type of language is repeated in the New Testament in Romans 12:1: “offer your bodies as a living sacrifice.”So what can we learn from this passage, to guide us as we prepare for another year?

**THERE IS HOPE IN SURRENDER**.

This entire psalm is one of trust that begins with this act of surrender. The psalmist is saying clearly and definitively not only that God is trustworthy but also that they are willing to surrender their entire self to God. This act of surrender and trust goes hand in hand with hope. Hope isn’t blind optimism but a faith that what is good and right will prevail. We have hope because God is trustworthy, and our surrender to the trustworthy God sets the stage to live out hope in the world around us and to embrace hope in our own lives.

Verse 3 says, “Don’t let anyone who hopes in you be put to shame.” Honor/shame culture was prominent when this was written. Bringing shame upon oneself or one’s family was something to be avoided at all costs. The plea “have no shame be brought upon those who hope” connects to God’s trustworthiness because those who trust in God won’t be put to shame because God always follows through. Those who hope will ultimately see their hope fulfilled. The shame is brought upon those who don’t hope: those who seek the downfall of the people of God and those who don’t surrender to God find shame. Surrender is the beginning of our hope too. When we surrender to God, we find that God is trustworthy. When we surrender to God, we ultimately find hope. While we might be waiting for our hope to be realized, we still hope for God to draw near, for the Messiah to come once again, for all to be made right—but it all begins with an act of surrender.

**SURRENDER LEADS TO FORMATION**.

One of the most prominent themes of this psalm is the language of teaching and guiding. In verse 4 we have “make known your ways to me;” in verse 5 we have “lead me” and “teach it to me;” in verse 8, the Lord “teaches sinners;” and in verse 9, God guides and teaches the weak. Surrender to God is not the end but, a starting point in a life of hope and transformation. Once the psalmist surrenders, they are open and moldable to becoming the person God is calling them to be. There is a contrast in the text between the person the psalmist used to be and the person into whom God is transforming the psalmist. There is a lot of language of confession, pleas, and cries that God would extend forgiveness for the sins of the past. There is language of growth and movement toward something more.

The psalmist is clearly illustrating the mercy, grace, and faithfulness of God, because God does not leave someone where they are but leads them to be transformed into someone who reflects God to the world. This transformation has clear results—people who follow the ways of God. Those who follow the ways of God are people of justice (verse 9). This idea of justice must not be confused with revenge; rather, it is the idea that things will be made right.

Justice is also a major theme for Advent. We long for the day of the Lord’s return, which will be a day of justice, when all shall be made right. Those who follow the ways of God have wisdom and discernment (verse 12). They know what path to take. That doesn’t mean every decision will be easy, but people who follow after the Lord make good and right decisions. Those who follow the ways of God will live a good life (verse 13). When Scripture talks about descendants having land, we have to think about this in the context of the time. Owning land meant long-term security. It meant well-being and life for generations of people, in a time and place when things were unstable and insecure. This “good life” does not necessarily mean what we might think it means.

While there is a component of security (owning land does that), this is also about the ability to be hospitable to others. Blessings and goodness were never meant to be things God’s people hoarded; rather, they were meant to be extended to others. The ability to be hospitable gives God’s people a chance to practice their faith in deeper ways. “Good” or “prosperous” is also a word of hope for a people who know what it means to go without. The Lord counsels those who follow the ways of God, and God’s covenant is known to them (verse 14). The presence of God is with people who surrender and follow the ways of the Lord. Knowing God and the promises of God is an important quality maybe one of the most important. While God often seems distant, perhaps especially to God’s ancient people, here is a promise that God is close and can be known when one surrenders and is transformed by God.

**GOD CONTINUES TODAY TO PROVE TRUSTWORTHY, FAITHFUL, AND WORTHY OF OUR HOPE.**

The main player throughout this text is God. The Lord does the good and right thing (verse 8) even when the psalmist doesn’t. God’s ways (or paths) are always loving and faithful (verse 10). At times this psalm can seem harsh, as if God is only compassionate toward those who act in right ways, but when we look closely, we can see that the psalm emphasizes repentance. The psalmist isn’t in the right; the psalmist has sinned, and acknowledges it. The compassion of God extends to all who are willing to receive that gift of compassion. Verse 16 illustrates the mercy of God. God is faithful and trustworthy throughout the text, even when God’s people are not. We can place our hope in God because God is continually faithful in spite of our unfaithfulness.

**FORMATION LEADS TO ACTION**.

Hope is active, not passive.The ways in which the Lord leads and teaches are action-related: Justice is active; righteousness is active; following God in and of itself is active. One of the dangers of giving over to our despair is that it often paralyzes us It paralyzes us in a place of inaction, but hope infuses us with the power to move forward in the ways that God is leading. One of the symbols of Advent is the lighting of the Advent candles, but this is not meant to be a symbol only for those of us in the sanctuary. We light the candle of hope not to hoard hope but to share it with others. The candle is lit in the sanctuary, but we carry the light of Christ with us into the world through our acts of justice, righteousness, and by following God wherever we are called.

We light a candle today. It is a symbol of hope, even in the midst of darkness and despair. We remember that God came and that God is coming again to make all things right. But if all we do is light this candle in this sanctuary, we miss an important part of this message. Hope is not just for us; it’s for the world. We know, because Romans 8:22 tells us so, that all of creation groans in expectation for things to be made right. We see the despair and death around us. The world longs for something more; the world longs for the hope of Christ. As we continue to follow after God and move from despair to hope, we learn to seek hope for the world too. We learn to carry the light of Christ—the light of hope—into a dark world.

The psalmist moves from a self-focused cry and lament to one for the entire nation in verse 22. This should be our prayer too. As we are transformed and learn to follow after Christ, We must also take the light of hope into a world that desperately needs it. So may we not leave the light of hope in this space but take it with us to our homes, our workplaces, our schools, and our communities, that they might also know the hope of the world.