

Proper 25
Year B
RCL

Jeremiah 31:7-9

Psalm 126

Hebrews 7:23-28

Mark 10:46-52

When we get hurt as children, and we're stricken with a boo-boo, two things console us- one—a kiss or a hug on or for our owies. I can't count the times my 21-month-old Rachel has been miraculously healed when Grammy kissed her boo-boo. And two: a band aid. Especially if it has their favorite animal or color or cartoon character on it. Our need for healing still remains even as we become adults, band-aids especially come in great help. Sure, we move to the boring skin-tone band-aids, but we still need something to gently cover our wounds- to make it safe so we can find healing- whether it be physical, emotional, or spiritual. If only it were that easy as grown-ups. As some of us are given the gift of growing old, the wounds that we bear sometimes become more than we can take, and it takes longer for those wounds to heal than a simple kiss or band-aid. We grow up and quickly learn life is more complex, less black and white, and we need something more to mend and repairs those ow-ies.

In both the Hebrew Scriptures and Gospel story, we are told of distinct images of pain, loss, and suffering. There's not only exile from a homeland, but exile from being accepted into society. Separation from love and a feeling of being far from God and all we know is represented well here.

The prophet Jeremiah lived in daunting times. So much so, that he's often called the "weeping prophet." The section that we hear from today is called "The Book of Consolation". What precedes this book of consolation is Jeremiah's season of gloom and doom. He prophesied, and eventually witnessed, one of the most crucial and horrifying periods in the history of the Jewish people with the destruction of Jerusalem and the Temple of Solomon, followed by the Babylonian Exile. But, because of his relationship with the living God, his words and admonitions could never end there. In the thick of grief and pain, Jeremiah spoke of the deep love and presence of God, and he laid foundations for the restoration of Israel.¹ From what we hear today, that is the ending God desires for us all.

"A great company shall return here," he proclaims from God. "With weeping they shall come, and with consolations I will lead them back, I will let them walk by brooks of water, in a straight path in which they shall not stumble." When we hear these words of comfort, we can begin to see how this passage talks to the story in our Gospel. When these two moments in history interact, we see that Bartimaeus' story doesn't end in despair either. As a blind man, he was an outcast in society, and through no choice of his own became a beggar. He was exiled from participating in society, from being fully human. And when we meet him, he was waiting, calling out, and the crowd ordered him to be silent. But Jesus looked at him and simply said, "what do you want me to do for you." Right before this interaction, Jesus asked the same question to James and John, even though they longed for something quite different. Their answer begged for honor and power. But not Bartimaeus. Bartimaeus

¹ The Jewish Study Bible.

wanted to see and be seen, to be heard and known again by his community. And he believed God would hear those cries.

I hate to be the bearer of this bad news, but there's no scientific proof that kissing ow-ies help heal them. And in fact, a fake study went out a few years ago that kissing ow-ies was ineffective in healing. The internet went nuts because, while we know that a medical treatment isn't happening, the great value is in the act of connecting. When we hold these two scriptural witnesses together, we are shown how God speaks to all those who cry out. God showed God's love for the Israelites by honoring God's covenant with them, by never forsaking them. Even in the midst of great exile. Even in the midst of anguish and oppression that we horrifyingly still see to this day. Jesus showed that same healing love by calling Bartimaeus beloved, and not a nuisance. Whether kissing boo—boos scientifically works or not, the deeper truth is, if we're in pain, whether caused by something we can't control or our own folly, the healing begins when someone acknowledges it and hears us.

Consolation comes in as many forms as there are people and communities. Band-aids are different as we get older, but we still need them to hold us together. Just as God gathers all of us together through those unique stories. So, the divine asks all of us, "what do you want me to do for you?" What will make you feel whole with life abundant? God leads us beside refreshing streams of us. God makes straight paths for us. Paths so straight we won't stumble. Jeremiah says even more—that we shall never languish again and instead be radiant over God's goodness. That our lives will become like watered gardens, blossoming and flourishing. That people dance and be merry. Our mourning, turned into joy and our sorrow into gladness. And if you can't grasp these promises today, that's ok. That's what the community

of faith is for- to hold on to the hope for you, until you can. The Living God invites us to be in relationship with the source of life, not just be a miracle worker and wish list giver.

Where do you find your consolation and hope? When you have those prayers for which you have no words how do you find a band-aid? And, are you able to be bold and courageous in asking for consolation/or peace/or answers/or joy or insert your answer to Jesus question here. In these readings, we hear hope in a variety of circumstances. Even in the world's deepest pain, God is faithful, spreading a balm of consolation over our open wounds, and over the wounds that we were thought were long closed. Especially those ones. Take heart, God is reaching out to you, so be bold in sharing with the divine what you need. Much like Jeremiah, we have witnessed utter devastation personally and communally, but with God, that is never the end of the story.