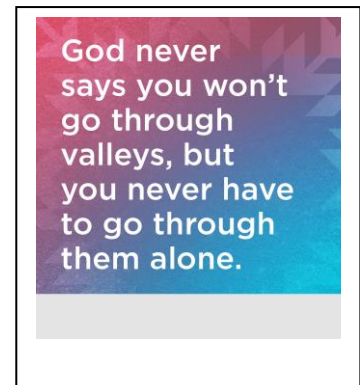


Sunday 5th November 2023.

In the Valley.

Scripture: Matt 1:2-3; Psalm 139:7-10

Today we are launching into a new message series called “God with Us” and the scripture which we will use as our anchor includes the word “incarnation” God with Us. We are approaching the season of Christmas, and we witness people who are not connected to the church, more willing to come.



Matthew 1:2-3 “Look, the virgin will conceive a child. She will give birth to a Son, and they will call Him Immanuel which means God is with us.”

For those who are followers of Christ, it is easier to believe that God is with us when things are good, when you are on the mountaintop. You know, those times when you receive good news, when your family are all connected, when you can find a car park outside of Woollies!

But it is sometimes more difficult to sense His presence when you are in the valley, when things aren't going the way you would want them to, when you get bad news, when you are afraid, when you are battling depression, when you feel alone or when you are worried.

What is interesting to me is that much of your life can be going well and you have different pockets of it where you are on the mountaintop, but there is just one area that seems to constantly weigh everything else down. So much is good, but this one thing brings a serious weight to your life.

And then there is the valley – the tragedy comes in and just steals everything that you’ve been hoping for. Some may be there right now. Some seasons and pockets of life are really good and you feel really close to God and sense His presence, but at the same time, there is that niggling fear or anxiety that captures your joy and takes it away.

Where is God in those valleys? It is interesting that valleys represent several things. We read this in the Bible as valleys were often where battles took place. Some of you may be in a battle in the middle of the valley today.

Valleys can be seasons of desperation and loneliness, but they are also times of growth. You may enjoy God in some ways on the mountain, but you experience Him in different ways when you are in the valley because that’s where you get to know Him intimately.

Psalm 84:5-7 says: “what joy for those whose strength comes from the Lord, who have set their minds on a pilgrimage to Jerusalem. When they walk through the Valley of Weeping, it will become a place of refreshing springs. The autumn rains will clothe it with blessings. They will continue to grow stronger, and each of them will appear before God in Jerusalem.”

This was the valley of Baka which was related to a tree that would ooze out sap, making it look like the tree was weeping. It is also called the Valley of Tears and the Valley of Loss.

The good news is for those of you who are Christ followers, there is a power bigger. It is our God who, when you hit the end of your

strength, His strength is made perfect in your weakness. If you are in the middle of a valley right now, you have access to the very real, ever-present power of a good God who is available and ready to come and assist you in your time of need.

The scripture says – blessed are those whose strength is found in God. It doesn't say – blessed are those who pull themselves up by their bootstraps; or who are really determined; or who say I don't need anybody or even they don't need God.

Another translation says: “what joy for those whose strength comes from the Lord, who have set their minds on a pilgrimage to Jerusalem. We are on a pilgrimage to Jerusalem, to the City of Refuge, to the place of peace. But you must travel through the Valley of tears, you must push through a little bit of pain to get to the presence of the goodness of God.

God goes before you to prepare the way. His words are a lamp to your feet and a light to your path. You may be in the valley right now, but this is not your home, you are journeying to the place of peace – just passing through.

Yes, it is hard being in the valley and you just want God to make it go away, make it stop, take it away, get me out of here. But often, the way is through the valley, not out of the valley.

The Israelites made a well and a place of springs in the Valley of Weeping. What does this suggest? When you are in a dry place, you dig a well, you clear a little hole as a container for the provision of rain that God will send. He hasn't sent it right now, but if we don't provide a container in preparation – we have

nowhere to store the rain. He wants us to show Him our faith and He will show us His faithfulness.

Jesus used this kind of philosophy too. He said to the man with the withered hand – stretch out your hand and I will heal you. You show me that you believe I can do it and I will do it.

The same with the lame man – take up your mat, get up and show me that you believe that I can make you walk.

If you dig it, He will fill it. If you plant it, He will grow it. You must plant your seed before you see the harvest. If you pray it, God hears your prayer. If you dig it, prepare it, God will reveal Himself.

When you are in a dry place, make a well, prepare for the presence and the provision of God. If you show God your faith, He will show you His faithfulness.

This requires us to pause for a while and stop rushing around. Imagine if Moses drove madly to the burning bush, took out his mobile, snapped a picture of the bush, put it on Facebook or Instagram, then sped off?

That is not what God wants. God says to us: “why don’t you stay a while; take off your sandals; why don’t you be still for a moment. Why don’t you make a well and then wait on me to fill it. If you seek Me, you will find Me. If you draw near to Me, I will draw near to you.

Conclusion:

Maybe you have been on the mountaintop or maybe your life is so low that you don’t even know what the mountaintop looks like. Sometimes God lets us get to a place where we are so low that we

can only look up and look toward Him. God will meet you wherever you are. God is the living Word, who became flesh in the person of Jesus, who became sin for us on the cross, died in our place and rose on the 3rd day. He defeated death, hell, and the grave, so that anyone, no matter who you are or what you have done, can be made completely new. Jesus forgives your sin; He brings abundant life to you.

Let's pray:

Lord God, there are pockets in my life that are good now, but there's this one pocket where the valley is very difficult. I need Your presence. Lord, I need Your forgiveness, Your grace, Your mercy, and Your salvation. Today I turn from my sin, I turn towards Jesus, I call on You, I am digging a well and I want You to meet me there Jesus. I give my life to You., I surrender to You.

Heavenly Father, we trust You to save us, to forgive us, to make us new, to lead us as our Lord and Saviour. Fill us with Your Holy Spirit so we can follow You and live for You every day of our life.

In Jesus name we pray – Amen.