
Let God Love You

**An Evensong Meditation by the Rev. Canon Lauren Holder
The Sixth Sunday after the Epiphany – Year C**

I have enjoyed sitting with the today's lectionary over the past week—particularly our readings from Psalms and Jeremiah. I love their use of the image of a tree planted by water—that we are called to be like those trees. But before we can get to the trees, we need to talk about the doom, curses and woes.

Our Psalm ends with the word “Doomed,” Jeremiah begins with the word “Cursed,” and then Luke finishes up with a list of “Woe's.” And once upon a time in my faith journey, I would have read these as warnings or even fear tactics. Delight in the God's law, *or you're doomed*. Trust in the Lord, *or be cursed*. And be careful about how much money, food or fun you have, *or your life will be full of woe and mourning*. I can remember a time in life when doing good had less to do with trusting God, and more to do with avoiding the doom, curses and woes. It was a backwards kind of motivation—to be running away from what's bad rather than turning to what's good.

I don't think that's a helpful reading of today's scripture. I don't think this is a vengeful God trying to scare us into right action and faith.

Instead I hear these words as an outpouring of love. I hear God pointing to the truth that meditating on God's law really does sustain us, and turning our hearts to God does keep us upright and OK when the storms come.

God invites us to trust in God's love and provision.

Think about the people in your life you trust the most—the people you know have your best interest at heart because they love you when you are at your best and when you are at your worst. Think of the people who can tell you when you're out of line, or working too late, or neglecting yourself, or neglecting your friendship. That doesn't just happen overnight. That kind of trust is built up over time in loving relationship. It's not blind faith. It's faith that knows something about you.

Well that's what God is inviting us into. A loving relationship that builds over time so that we come to trust in God's love and provision and law and goodness and mercy. And this loving relationship doesn't protect us *from* hardships. But it does protect us *in* the storms that will come—the heartaches and the disappointments and the loss—the trust gained in that loving relationship over the year allows us to be rooted and grounded in the love of God so that we can stand upright in the full knowledge of who we are and whose we are.

And when we don't have that, then yeah, it can feel like we're in parched places of the wilderness... even when things seem to be going great on the outside, we can feel hollow and untethered on the inside, longing for love to ground us.

So friends, hear these words of doom, curse and woe. But hear them as a recognition of what you've been through or perhaps where you are. And then hear this invitation to let love wash over you—to let love seep up through your toes—to taste and see that the Lord is good, that God's love is for you... especially for you. Let God love you. And having felt that love, reach out for more, until you are rooted and grounded in God's abiding love for you. What springs forth from your branches and from your life just might surprise you.

Amen.

© *The Cathedral of St. Philip. All rights reserved.*