



Grow, Pray, Study

Servants of Christ United Methodist Parish

— Sunday, August 23, 2020

GROW, PRAY, STUDY ---- FOR SUNDAY AUGUST 23RD, 2020 -----ISAIAH 51: 1-3

51 "Listen to me, you who pursue righteousness

and who seek the Lord:

Look to the rock from which you were cut

and to the quarry from which you were hewn;

2 look to Abraham, your father,

and to Sarah, who gave you birth.

When I called him he was only one man,

and I blessed him and made him many.

3 The Lord will surely comfort Zion

and will look with compassion on all her ruins;

he will make her deserts like Eden,

her wastelands like the garden of the Lord.

Joy and gladness will be found in her,

thanksgiving and the sound of singing.

My grandfather was a descendant of the Cherokee people and a Baptist preacher.

And cigarette salesman. It's complicated. One cold foggy October evening,

returning from a sales trip in Winston Salem, his truck went off the side of a mountain. Mom was about 5 years old. It took days to find him and his truck many hundreds of yards down the rocky mountain. These were the days before police dramas on TV as the police noticed a (bullet?) hole in his side and no money in the truck (after a sales trip...) No more investigation was ever done.

This spot called "The Jumpin' Off Point" is still very important to my family. As a child we would stop on our way to see relatives and look down. For years one could see the remains of the mangled truck if you looked carefully. There is even a photo of my whole family standing at the edge on New Year's Eve, 1978. I guess we needed to touch where a loved one left this world. We needed to find peace, closure, especially my Mom who doesn't have many memories of her Dad. I guess we all need to revisit the touch points of our lives.

In today's scripture, Israel is in exile. Isaiah tries to encourage them. He knows they've been trying their best to continue practicing their faith. He knows they are searching for something solid in a world that is anything but. So he encourages them to, "Look to the rock from which you were cut and to the quarry from which you were hewn." Look back to the rocks of Abraham and Sarah who made a nation with all the odds against them. The people in exile are part of those rocks. They carry Abraham and Sarah's laughing strength with them.

And he calls them to remember God's faithfulness and promises. God will comfort, have compassion, make their ruins into a Garden of Eden. There will be joy and thanksgiving once more.

I believe may be speaking these same words to us. Don't up. Look up, look down, look all around; What we think is permanent is not. Only God is forever and he has called us to live with him for all eternity.

It is interesting that the place where the Israelites were in exile was the exact same geographical region where Abraham and Sarah were(!) Imagine that. They were in the place that gave them birth, made them who they were and they didn't

realize it. They were carrying Abraham and Sarah with them in exile and maybe they had forgotten.

I often think about my grandfather, look at his photos, all that dark thick hair. I think about my great uncle Tam and his distinct bulbous nose and deep brown skin; I am glad I had chances to meet him over the years. Since I didn't have my grandfather, at least I had uncle Tam. Sometimes I can't believe I am from those rocks. And if that is the case, how much more so are we from the rocks of Sarah and Abraham? And Isaiah. And cousin Matthew. Sister Martha.

When the going gets tough, remember the Rock from which you were sculpted.

1 Samuel 2:2 "There is no one holy like the LORD; there is no one besides you; there is no Rock like our God."