

ASH WEDNESDAY – MARCH 1, 2006

St. Mark's Evangelical Lutheran Church

THIS IS TOO HARD! Psalm 6

Do you find life difficult? Do you have a hard time at work? Do you have difficulty making friends and does it appear that your friends often don't meet the expectations you have? Do you have family problems? Your children don't get along. You and your spouse often have difficulties. Do you have a lot of aches and pains? Are you prone to sicknesses? All these situations make life difficult. Life isn't always so wonderful and rosy.

Today as we begin the season of Lent and reflect on the seriousness of sin and its consequences we turn our thoughts and attention to a psalm written by King David, Psalm 6. As we listen to David's plea we learn **THIS IS TOO HARD!** As David experienced and you and I also experience as we go through life we have **I) Physical Problems;** and **II) People Problems** that affect our emotional well being.

WE HAVE PHYSICAL PROBLEMS

We are not sure what circumstances David is referring to when he wrote this psalm; however there are several events in David's life which may have led him to write the words before us. It is possible that this psalm was written close to David's death. His body was failing. We are told that David was advanced in years and was no longer able to keep warm even when they put covers on him. The end of his life was getting closer. When a person gets closer to the end of their life suddenly the consequences of sin become very real and frightening. Our physical death is the result of our failure to be perfect. Remember God had said to Adam and Eve, "for dust you are and to dust you will return." (Genesis 3:19b) As we get closer to the end of our physical life, we often face many health issues. Our bodies wear out. We don't have the strength and stamina that we had when we were younger and more vibrant. We find our memories failing, our eyesight grows dim, our hearing fails.

If you want to see what sin does to a person just compare your body at the age of 60, 70 or 80 with what your body was like when you were 18 or 21. No amount of exercising, no amount of vitamins and drugs will keep any of us alive forever. It may improve the quality of our lives but it will not stop us from dying. For death is a consequence of sin.

David recognizes this and he pleads with the Lord. He cries out, “O LORD do not rebuke me in your anger or discipline me in your wrath. Be merciful to me, LORD, for I am faint; O LORD, heal me for my bones are in agony. My soul is in anguish. How long, O LORD, how long?” (Vv. 1-3). Sin is serious and it does a number on everyone of us. When you are young, you don’t often recognize how serious sin is and what it can do to you. When we are young, we often think we are invincible and nothing will ever hurt us. But young people die just as easy as old people. Young people can have accidents be stricken with cancer or other incurable diseases just as well as someone who is older. Death is not a respecter of age.

The physical pains and aches that we have; the illnesses that we contract all remind us that these things would not affect us if we were perfect. But we are not perfect. These are the consequences of sin and they make our life on this earth hard and at times wearisome. If you don’t think sin is serious just look around you. Study the people in your family and community and see the effects that sin has had on every person. David recognizes his physical weaknesses and his past sins still come back to haunt him.

PEOPLE PROBLEMS

David also experienced many people problems in his life just as you and I do. These weighed heavily upon him. Remember David’s life was not so perfect. He had an adulterous affair with a married woman. He then saw to the murder of the woman’s husband when she got pregnant. He tried to cover up this sin until the prophet Nathan finally confronted him and he confessed his sin and was assured of God’s pardon. However, there were still consequences that David would pay the rest of his life for what he had done to Uriah and Bathsheba’s family. Remember some of the consequences that David experienced because of his sin. Immediately after assuring David that God would not damn him eternally for his disobedience, the prophet Nathan then proceeds to tell David, “the son born to you will die.” (2 Samuel 12:14b) Nathan also warns David that there will be other problems in his family. This psalm was written during or after some of those problems had stricken David. One of David’s sons, Amnon, raped one of David’s daughters, Tamar. When Absalom the brother of Tamar learned that his half- brother, Amnon, had raped his sister he hated him. Two years later Absalom saw to the murder of his half-brother, Amnon, for raping his sister. Later Absalom conspired to become king of Israel. David was forced to flee from his palace in Jerusalem. Absalom came in and set up a tent on the roof of David’s palace and began to sleep with his father’s concubines. All the people in Israel knew what Absalom had done. When David’s army returned to Jerusalem, Absalom fled the city. As he was riding on his donkey, his long air got caught in the branches of an oak tree and he was left hanging there. When David’s soldiers saw this they reported it their captain, Joab. Joab took three javelins and plunged them into Absalom’s heart, ending his life. This psalm might have been written as David was going through all this agony. Or it may also have been written closer to David’s death when another son, Adonijah, was conspiring with some of David’s officials to make himself king instead of Solomon whom David intended to succeed him.

When you read the life of David and all the intrigue, murder and conspiracies that surrounded him and his family, you can see the people problems that David experienced in his life. You see the great emotional pain that David also experienced as he writes, "I am worn out from groaning; all night long I flood my bed with weeping and drench my couch with tears. My eyes grow weak with sorrow; they fail because of all my foes. Away from me, all you who do evil." (Vv. 6-8a) How would you feel if your son chased you out of your home and took your wife and slept with her? How would you feel if one of your sons did everything in his power and behind your back to undermine your wishes stated in your last will and testament?

Sin is ugly and it destroys families and ruins our personal relationships with other people.

Where do you find strength, comfort and help as you deal with physical and people problems in life? David knew. He cries out, "Turn, O LORD, and deliver me; save me because of your unfailing love." David appeals to the LORD for help and rescue from all these problems. Why? He says to the LORD, "save me because of your mercy." David knows that the LORD is merciful. The LORD forgives iniquity, transgression and sin. The LORD will not eternally condemn. We will suffer earthly consequences for our sin and sinful actions. Even Adam and Eve after God promised them a Savior who would deliver them then were told all the consequences they each would suffer because of their rebellion. God then threw them out of the paradise that he had created for them. They lost their perfect home. But they left with the promise that they would one day be restored to a perfect relationship with their Creator again.

This Lenten season we will again review the great mercy of our God as he carries out his plan to rescue and deliver us from the eternal punishment that we justly deserve for our sin.

As David concludes his song he reminds us that God is merciful and God does rescue and save us. David shouts, "'Away from me, all you who do evil, for the LORD has heard my weeping. The LORD has heard my cry for mercy; the LORD accepts my prayer. All my enemies will be ashamed and dismayed; they will turn back in sudden disgrace.'" (Vv. 8-10)

Is life hard? It certainly is. We all encounter at one time or another in our lives physical problems and ailments. We also have our people problems. We experience the consequences and seriousness of sin in this world and sin in our own lives. But with David we praise and thank the LORD because he has been merciful to us. He has loved us with an unfailing love. He has rescued us from the eternal punishment we should also receive for our sins. He has done that in our Savior Jesus Christ who suffered hell for us.

Amen.