



Image: Crate and Barrel

CONCORD
SUNDAY SCHOOL

LESSON 28

SUNDAY,
JULY 12, 2020

Psalm 119:105-112

105 Your word is a lamp to my feet
and a light to my path.

106 I have sworn an oath and confirmed it,
to observe your righteous ordinances.

107 I am severely afflicted;
give me life, O Lord, according to your word.

108 Accept my offerings of praise, O Lord,
and teach me your ordinances.

109 I hold my life in my hand continually,
but I do not forget your law.

110 The wicked have laid a snare for me,
but I do not stray from your precepts.

111 Your decrees are my heritage forever;
they are the joy of my heart.

112 I incline my heart to perform your statutes
forever, to the end.

Background

This psalm is quite long, but that's not the only intriguing thing about it! Biblical scholars note its tendency to refer to the Torah with friendly language. We get sen-

tences like “I love your law,” and “your law is truth,” “I love your commandments.” The people who would be hearing this passage at this time were dealing with great trauma. This is a People who are coming to understand the Word as more and more important in a post-exilic period. Nothing is stable, nothing is consistent, and everything is always up in the air. In your devotional period, read the rest of the psalm. What resonates for you these days?

Today’s lesson will focus on strengthening our spiritual practices.

Read the scripture out loud together.

Discuss with someone in your home. Do you have a place in your home where you keep photos of family members? Can you talk about how that space came to be? Why did you choose that space?

What’s happening during this passage?

This is a psalm written in the voice of someone who reflecting on challenges. For this person, the Word is a resource. It is a “lamp,” a “light,” and part of the psalmist’s “heritage.” While the writer talks about being “severely afflicted,” still, the writer experiences an intense connection to the “ordinances,” “law,” “precepts,” “decrees.” The writer has an intimate relationship with the Word.

Are these people obsessed with their holy book?

As people living in 2020, it may be easy to think that the people of this time were obsessed with their holy book. But what if we practiced some empathy? In this season of uncertainty, are there spiritual practices you find yourself reflecting on fondly? Do you find yourself leaning on rituals a little more intensely? Any songs anchoring you with extra tenderness? When human beings are in unstable seasons, we lean on the words that bring comfort and familiarity.

Did anyone else cry last week while watching the praise team sing virtually? You’re not alone! Spiritual practices have a way of becoming more precious to us when we’re in heightened and extended states of stress.

What does the word do?

The Word illuminates. It opens meaning. It is a “lamp unto my feet and a light unto my path.” It is not an instructional book, a list of do’s and don’ts, or a set of rules. It is a resource that we use to understand the world we are in. As Pastor Simpson often says, “you read it, and it reads you.” What we practice, then, is what we become. If we rehearse stories about a God who thinks we are worthless, we will feel worthless. If we rehearse stories about a God who loves us and wants us to be well, we will feel empowered to seek freedom. Freedom Faith (a la Rev. Dr. Prathia Hall) requires a God who conspires for our freedom.

Are there any scriptures that make you feel good and loved? Which ones do you return to? How about hymns or songs? Share them with the group.

What questions do you still have of this scripture? How will you commit to journeying with this text this week?



Connection to Today’s World

Disney released *Coco* in November 2017. This story follows a young boy who goes on an adventure between Earth and the land of the ancestors. Throughout the movie, the audience is introduced to the practice of altar remembrances. In this tradition, pictures are kept on the *ofrenda* and they are honored as ancestors. But sadly, there was no photo to solidify Miguel’s great-great-grandfather’s memory on the altar.

After his adventure to the ancestral realm, he realizes that he has to help his grandmother remember her father. If she cannot remember him, his memory will be lost forever.

So Miguel wondered, how can I bring this sacred memory back to Mama Coco? How can we keep our great-great-grandfather’s memory alive, without a photo? Without a family reunion? Without in-person gathering?

Miguel began to sing the song of his family.

*Remember me
Though I have to say goodbye
Remember me
Don't let it make you cry
Forever if I'm far away
I hold you in my heart
I sing a secret song to you
Each night we are apart*

*Remember me
Though I have to travel far
Remember me
Each time you hear a sad guitar
Know that I'm with you
The only way that I can be
Until you're in my arms again
Remember me.*

As Miguel sang this song, Mama Coco came back to herself. The music of the ancestors has the power to start great reflections. She began to tell nearly-forgotten stories about her father, and in doing so, brought the family together.

Journal: What songs make you feel nostalgic? What do they make you think about?

Closing: Sing “How Great Thou Art.”

*When through the woods
And forest glades I wander
I hear the birds
Sing sweetly in the trees,
When I look down
From lofty mountain grandeur
And hear the brook
And feel the gentle breeze.*

*Then sings my soul,
My Savior God, to Thee,
How great Thou art!
How great Thou art!
Then sings my soul,
My Savior God, to Thee,
How great Thou art!
How great Thou art!*

Prayer:

Dear God,

You have put a song in our hearts and in our communities. We thank you for the hymns of ancestors, the prayer of elders, the work of people who lived before we even arrived to this Earth. You are always preparing a place for us. May our current work hold future generations with tenderness and care.

God, help us to hold on to the things that bring us life. Help us to remember the words that keep our minds well. Help us to block out any information that terrorizes our spirits in this time. We know that you conspire for our freedom and wholeness.

In Jesus' name we pray,
Amen