

Sermon for 11 August 2024 @ Bethesda UMC/Baltimore

Twelfth Sunday after Pentecost

Scriptures: 2 Samuel 18:5-9, 15, 31-33; 848: Psalm 130; Ephesians 4:25-5:2; John 6:35-41-51

Sermon

It's as bad as any gang story. One brother kills another and then leads a revolt against the big-time gang leader, who's their father, and gets killed himself. Now the king-pin grieves over the whole miserable show.

How did this get in the Bible?

It's our classic Christian family tragedy; and when we say Jesus was "of the family of David," we tend to forget it's right there in the shadows all through Christmas and the coming of the Wise Men, and even Holy Thursday and Easter morning.

Grief is our companion, all along the Way we Christians travel.

As a parent, and as a child, I have remembered this more than I can count the times.

I ask us now, no matter who we are or how we feel, to be silent and think about that for a few moments. There's nobody in jail, or in high office; nobody still young, or anybody old, who doesn't belong to the tragic, weeping King David in some way, as a human being.

Then listen to the writer of John's Gospel have Jesus say, "I am the bread of life. Whoever comes to me will never be hungry, and whoever believes in me will never be thirsty." Be still again; maybe close your eyes.

Let this be a time when you taste both these ideas as deeply as you can. Sorrow, and comfort. Despair, and fulfilment. Remember that's why you are here: To be as aware as possible that you belong with other people who face both sides of life, all the time, awake or sleeping, idle or occupied.

Take several deep breaths, and stay still a little longer... Now open your eyes and close this time as you hear these words: "Be kind to one another, tenderhearted, forgiving one another, as God in Christ has forgiven you."

Sometimes it helps to hold both sides of things equally before us. As much as we can, we are here to be a house of prayer for all people. That means we don't choose sides; we bring both dark and light into this space and expect the Holy Spirit to open us all to healing here.

God has done the choosing. Each of us has responded.

Let us savor our welcome.

Amen.