

Sermon for the Second Vespers of Lent

'But you, O Lord, how long?'

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Such is the lament of all mankind. An ancient crying out; the crying out of a young infant, and an aged man, begging for the return of the Lord.

And it is indeed begging, for we have no right to demand that our God return, for He has every right to have forsaken us. It is not Him that turned His back on us, but in our disobedience, we turned our back on Him. First did Adam and Eve, then Cain and Abel, than all mankind after. Every man sins. Every man disobeys. Every soul has dashed the Law upon the rocks in rebellion.

We turned our back on God, for we sinned, and when we turned around, we were surprised to find that He had left. That we had been abandoned. Abandoned for we desired to be orphans, to be sinners.

For this reason, the Sixth Psalm begins not with supplication or begging; that comes a little later. It begins with a plea for mercy, for mercy we need more deeply than the hungry need bread or the thirsty water.

'O Lord, rebuke me not in your anger, nor discipline me in your wrath.'

For surely, having beheld our daily and grievous sinning, committed without shame nor thought, the Lord must burn with righteous anger. His cup must overflow with wrath. For He is a just God, and wrath is merely justice looking upon wrongdoing.

'Be gracious to me, O Lord, for I am languishing; heal me, O Lord, for my bones are troubled.'

For grace we need, for we cannot save ourselves. And salvation we need, for we

cannot heal ourselves. Wretched men that we are, we cannot do anything of ourselves. We can only plead and hope. Hope that the God we spurned may not render justice to us. May not exact what we owe from us. Hope that the God we hated may not hate us. For otherwise, we *languish*, and beg, '*O Lord, how long?*'

What cause do we have to hope? After all the iniquity we have committed against the Almighty, why do we still hope in him? It is not because of any value we have, for sure. It can be nothing else but His *steadfast love*, that He may deliver us from death, *where there is no remembrance of Him*. We are but *the grass of the field or the bloom of the flower, which withers, and is no more*. We are nothing before Him who is Everything.

But Him Who is Everything seems to disagree with all I have said, which is but nothing.

For you see, The Lord your God does not hate us. Neither does He desire to pour out the fury of His wrath upon us. For to Him, we are not of no value. Rather, we are a *pearl of great price, a treasure hidden, His people, His bride*.

For see how the Psalm turns:

*'I am weary with my moaning; every night
I flood my bed with tears. I drench my couch with weeping.'*

Dear Christians, this is no longer the lament of mankind; it is the lament of God. The God who longs for us, who pleads with us to return, who begs us to come home; who misses us, who loves us.

Is not the entire Bible but the story of a God that will not stop following a wandering people? Will not stop crying '*return to me*' to a hateful nation? We hate, and we wander, even now, our hearts wander far away from God. But still, He *drenches his couch with weeping*, and pleads again and again, to you, to me, yesterday, today, and tomorrow, he pleads, '*return to me.*'

The Psalmist sees the weariness of His God; he hears the weeping of the Lord. And he realizes that he was all wrong. God was not filled with anger. He was filled with sorrow, for He had lost the sheep of His

pasture, and the bride of His heart.

The Psalmist sees that God never turned His back on Him, nor could He ever turn His back on God. For God is with Him, For He is our Emmanuel.

For this reason we turn from our mourning and weeping, and fortified with the knowledge of God's steadfast love for us, we turn against the wickedness and fashions and furies of the world, against the devil, and all his works, and all his ways, and we declare '*Depart from me, all you workers of evil.*'

'For the Lord has heard the sound of my weeping.'

'The Lord has heard my plea.'

And 'In Him I take refuge.'

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Preached by Pastor Fields

Sermon Text: Psalm 6.