

“Need” Sermon for July 1, 2018
Psalm 130, Mark 5:25-34

***Depth of mercy, can there be
mercy still reserved for me?
Can my God his wrath forbear,
Me, the chief of sinners spare.***

A friend recently posted a video on FB of a classmate he had grown up with in our old West Woodlawn community of Chicago. She was so inebriated she could only twirl the emaciated body around back and forth in a semi-circular motion crying out the words:

Are you tired, O seein' me suffer Lord,
Come on, and rescue me.
Rescue me, Lord, Rescue me.
Open my eyes, Lord, rescue me.
I'm blind and I cannot see. Rescue me.
I said, I'm on bended knees, Asking you Lord
To rescue me. Rescue me, Lord, Rescue me.

She sang in a plain chant that was once the African tonal foundation of “call-and-response” that emerged in America as “the Blues.” It was enchanting while horrifying in its desperation, a plaintive cry to God who she could not get close to, who seemed so far away. could not hear. What she wailed out sounded like a pure human cry from deep within her, a cry that seemed to contradict her addiction, that seemed destined to take her life. Though her mind was no longer her own, her spirit cried out.

The woman who had been subject to bleeding for twenty-six years was essentially no different. Her life oozed out of her daily. Under the care of many doctors, she only continued to grow worse. Hearing that Jesus was passing by she thought, “If I can just touch his clothes, I will be healed.” “If I can just see him and touch him, my need can be met.”

That addict, nearly out of her mind, had once, perhaps as a little girl, been in a church where she had heard this African call and response prayer:

1 Out of the depths I cry to you, Lord;

2 Lord, hear my voice. Let your ears be attentive to my cry for mercy

Prayers directed to our real need are expressed, “Out of our depths.”

3 If you, Lord, kept a record of sins,
Lord, who could stand?

4 But with you there is forgiveness,
so that we can, with reverence, serve you.

The literal words of Paul and Peter, proclaim that Christ’s suffering and death was a substitution for our sins. Yes, Christ’s suffering does symbolizes the reality that his obedience accomplishes God’s plan. We are likewise called to surrender our present lives to the cause of Christ’s promised and coming

kingdom, sings of which can be realized by our present witness to Christ's life in us. When we are so surrendered to God's need, we fully experience God's resurrecting, unconditional love in our depths. "He died for all," giving his all to satisfy our real and deep need, "that they who live should no longer live for themselves, but for him who died and rose again." The Psalmist says: God does not keep a record of sins, but the consequences of our sins can prevent us from accessing God.

After all the howling of prayers planted deep inside her long ago, she can stop the inner turmoil and submit if it's not too late, if the time is still "today." Real human need requires the depth of God's mercy. God's love never ends, only our capacity to respond to it. Thanks be to God; His mercy goes deeper than we can to supply our need. Amen.