

Our Redeemer Lutheran Church  
Quincy, IL  
Rev. Martin Eden

Pentecost 17  
Saturday, October 1, 2022, at 5:00 p.m.  
Sunday, October 2, 2022, at 9:00 a.m.

# “You are not Alone”

Habakkuk 1:1-4; 2:1-4

T. S. Elliot was one of the more popular playwrights of the first half of the 20<sup>th</sup> Century. He was born in St. Louis but emigrated to England, became a British citizen, and became a devout member of the Church of England. Overt Christian themes run through his plays.

In his most famous play, *The Cocktail Hour*, (which is actually based on an ancient play by the Greek playwright Euripides) he has this woman come up to this Uninvited Guest (who you later find out is a psychiatrist). She says to the psychiatrist, “I really hope there is something wrong with me.” He is a bit taken aback and asks, “Why would you hope for that?” She says something to the effect, “Well, I am suffering and my entire world is in turmoil. As far as I can tell, there are only two possibilities: either the world in its essence is conspiring against me and I am doomed, because what am I going to do to fix the structure of the world, or I am doing something wrong, because if I am doing something wrong, then I can fix it.”

This is the bleak perceived reality of someone without the Gospel, without Christ as their Savior. If God is not providing salvation from outside of us, and the

universe is against us, that is not a fixable solution. Exactly how are you going to fix the world. So, the character in the play has the vain hope that the world is just fine and that all she needs to do is fix herself.

First of all, to say that the world is fine is to reject all of Scripture, deny the reality of Original Sin, and reject any need for a Savior. Why would there be the need for a Savior if the world is fine? If all that is wrong is me, then I only need to fix what is wrong with me. Then all will be well and I can be my own savior. Again, the vain hope of salvation without Christ.

Why is the woman in the play seeking out help to fix her life? She is enduring some sort of suffering and pain. Be it physical or emotional (in the play it seems emotional), when you are in pain there is nothing which matters more to you than suffering and pain – and often, the emotional pain hurts the worst. It seems to be the most real thing in your life. There is nothing that gets your attention and keeps your attention more than pain. Why is it the most “real” thing? Try arguing it away. You could have all the money in the world and it would mean nothing if your life was a whirlwind of suffering, pain, trials, and betrayal. You would trade every last dime for a peaceful and quiet life.

So, if pain and suffering is the most real thing this world throws at us, and we can't fix the world, and we can't argue away our pain, we need to find something that comes from outside of us, from outside of the world which is greater than the suffering and pain. What is greater than pain and suffering? I would argue: Love. Scripture says “God is love.” I have seen for myself and heard numerous anecdotes of how even a simple act of kindness done in love can bring peace and comfort.

Just in the short time that Julianna has been working at the hospital with her nursing program, she has come home with a number of such stories. A simple act of kindness done in love completely changes a person. Love being the greater reality is a theme in the first Harry Potter book. J. K. Rowling, the author, like T. S. Elliot, has Christian themes in her writings and a strong Anglican background.

Something else greater is “Truth.” Which is why the postmodernists and the Marxists want to do away with the idea of truth. Jesus says, “I am the Truth.” The problem is when we put blinders on and all we see is the pain and suffering and not the love and truth of God. We are like the prophet Habakkuk who cries out: “O Lord, how long shall I cry for help, and you will not hear? Or cry to you ‘Violence!’ and you will not save? Why do you make me see iniquity, and why do you idly look at wrong?”

Every generation has expressed frustration and anger at this sinful world. Even the people of God, even a prophet of God has been frustrated with God that we do not see results here and now.

There is a story from the OT, from the life of the prophet Elisha which one of the pastors at the LWML Rally’s mentioned and I can’t stop thinking about it. As it is LWML Sunday, I just have to give a “shout out” to the ladies of the CID. I really enjoyed my time with them the last two weeks. At five of the six rally’s I attended, Rev. Ryan Meyer had the Bible study and he referenced this obscure story which I honestly did not recall. I guess I just didn’t pay attention to the significance. It comes right after the story of the floating axe head. I remember that one.

The story comes from 2 Kings 6. The king of Syria is warring against Israel. Elisha keeps rescuing the king of Israel by giving him a prophetic “heads-up” concerning the plans and movements of the Syrian forces.

So the Syrian forces come after Elisha at the city of Dothan. A great army surrounded the city. Elisha’s servant looks out and is terrified. Elisha says, “Do not be afraid, for those who are with us are more than those who are with them.” Then Elisha prayed, “O Lord, please open his eyes that he may see.”

So the Lord opened the eyes of the young man and he saw horses and chariots of fire all around them. There was no need to fear. One way or another, the Lord will provide. It does not mean that we will have a life free of pain or suffering. Elisha and his servant and the King of Israel had a difficult journey in front of them. But they were not alone.

We look out upon the pain and suffering of this world and cry out like Habakkuk: “How long, O Lord!” The prayer of Elisha is superior to the cry of Habakkuk, just as the truth and love of God is superior to pain and suffering. We cry out, “O Lord, please open our eyes that we may see.”

If you are enduring pain or suffering today or perceive that the entire universe is against you, I understand that it is the most real thing and is at the forefront of your mind. But do not imagine that this promise of what the love and truth of God means for your is an empty message. And do not imagine that you are alone. As Elisha says, “Do not be afraid, for those who are with us are more than those who are with them. . . O Lord, please open our eyes that we may see.” Amen.