

Galatians 3:1-5

“Where are the saints?”

We’ve had a lot of rain here lately. Especially up in the mountains they’ve had as much as 20” of rain. The flooding is incredible. When we have weeks with rain like this people can get a little sad – a little blue. It reminds me of an old Jimmy Ruffin song many of you might remember.

“As I walk this land of broken dreams
I have visions of many things
But happiness is just an illusion
Filled with sadness and confusion.
What becomes of the broken-hearted
Who had love that’s now departed?
I know I’ve got to find
Some kind of peace of mind
Maybe”¹

Church, What is the name of that song? **“What Becomes of the Brokenhearted”** Weeks like this we can find ourselves wishing and hoping for that warm summer sun. We can become like the brokenhearted, longing for love and happiness. Where did the sun go? (pause) Where did our love go? (pause) It often feels as though they have both long departed. Let me ask you church, are there times when it feels as though God’s love has long since departed? (long pause) When we have those times where we feel like God has left do we find ourselves thinking I’ve got to do something to bring God back – as if peace of mind was really something we could find like a missing sweater in the back of the closet? Do y’all ever feel that way?

If you do feel that way there is good news this morning. The Son of God has not gone away. God’s love has not gone away. God loves each and every person here today; (pause) and every person who did not make it into church this morning. God has sent God’s Helper to bring every one of us home. The Holy Spirit comes from and is a part of the full Triune God.² Jesus tells the disciples the Holy Spirit, “convinces the world of sin and of righteousness and of judgment (John 16:8). Most importantly for our passage this morning the Holy Spirit leads us through a faithful response to the Gospel and the fellowship of the Church.³ The reason that point is so important is because too many of the Galatians stopped listening to the Holy Spirit and went back to trying to either earn salvation, or create a relationship with God by trying to obedient to the Law of Moses.

Paul writes to the Galatians, **“Did you receive the Spirit by works of the law, or by hearing with faith”** (Gal 3:2)? **“Does he who supplies the Spirit to you and works miracles among you do so by works of the law, or by hearing with faith”** (Gal 3:5)? I think it works a bit like this. (By a show of hands) How many of y’all know carpenters or woodworkers? (pause) How many of you know carpenters or woodworkers who are missing part of a finger? (pause) When I was in college I had to take a 3-Design class where we would be working with table saws, band saws and lots of sharp, pointy things. The professor’s dad had been a wood worker for years

¹ “What Becomes of the Brokenhearted,” Jimmy Ruffin (performer), William Weatherspoon, Paul Riser, James Dean (writers), (Mowtown Records: Hitsville USA 1966).

² The Book of Discipline of the United Methodist Church, 2016, (Nashville: The United Methodist Publishing House 2016) ¶104, Confession of the Evangelical United Brethren, Article III, p73.

³ Ibid.

and he had had a couple of “accidents.” The professor wanted to make sure we had all of our fingers and toes when the class was over, so he asked us this question. “Why do you think he lost those fingers and finger tips?” (pause) Church, why do you think he lost all of those fingers and finger tips? (pause) He got comfortable. He quit paying attention to what he was doing. When his finger touched the saw blade he started paying real, real close attention. (pause) He paid real close attention for a while. The professor’s dad did so much wood working it did not take long for him to become comfortable again. I think maybe the Galatians became comfortable in their faith. When they became comfortable they quit listening for the Holy Spirit. Pretty soon they had cut themselves and they didn’t even realize it. They cut themselves off from the life giving tap of God’s Holy Spirit. God does not cut us off from God’s love. We cut ourselves off from God’s goodness, and grace when we quit listening, and paying attention to the Holy Spirit. They figured out something was wrong when they quit being fruitful and divisions arose among them. It’s kinda like being outside on a summer day in the heat when a cloud comes in front of the sun.

Hear the good news. The sun didn’t go anywhere. The sun is just behind the clouds. The Holy Spirit did not leave the Galatians. It was the Holy Spirit who let the Galatians know they had strayed. They had allowed other things to cloud their ability to see the Son of God. Sisters and brothers becoming comfortable in our faith in never a good thing. It’s a lot like falling asleep at the wheel. Accidents happen when we are not paying attention. The Galatians had had an accident of faith. They took a wrong turn – got lost and started following bad directions. Paul scolds them saying, “**O foolish Galatians! Who has bewitched you, before whose eyes Jesus Christ was publicly portrayed as crucified**” (Gal 3:1)? Paul is basically asking the Galatians who gave them these terrible directions?

The purpose of Paul’s correction is both to point out just how lost the Galatians are, and to point out that although we may become lost the Holy Spirit provides the grace to rise again and to amend our lives.⁴ My brothers and sisters when the storms of life rage and the rains fall down, and the earth becomes too soft to support the roots of our faith the Holy Spirit and the love of God can feel very very far away. When we become too comfortable in our faith it is easy to become lost in our opinions or in the opinions of others. It doesn’t matter if those opinions come from Roseanne Barr or Samantha Bee. Once lost it is even possible to wonder if the sun will ever shine again. Will we feel God’s love again? Will we continue to be the walking wounded who cease to believe in happiness as anything other than an illusion? What are we to do when love becomes just another word?

You say love is just a word, just four letters in a row
Just a thing that people say or they never tell you so
And you use every excuse to let nobody in
Now this cloud you bring around has become your only friend

And everybody saying that it's going to go away but it don't go
And everybody's telling you one day it's going to change
But you don't know if it's really going to end

But there is a way, there is a spark

⁴ The Book of Discipline of the United Methodist Church, 2016, (Nashville: The United Methodist Publishing House 2016) ¶104, Articles of Religion of the Methodist Church, Article XII, p68.

There is a hope that you can hold on to
There is a lifeline come to the rescue
Just like a hand that's waiting for you
And if you believe in this I promise that you won't be alone
There is a way, the truth and the life, and the way⁵

My sisters and brothers if you are living in a cloud of sin and uncertainty – if you are lost, or just blue and sad without any idea as to why please know that God is reaching out for you. You don't have to be alone. Do not be deceived. God is reaching out for you. The Holy Spirit is that hand that's reaching out to bring you back home. God loves you. And the the power of God's love is much more than peace of mind. The power of God's love is more than just a four letter word. The power of God's love brings the dead back to life. The power of God's love heals the sick, restores the wounded and gives abundant life. My brothers and sisters today is a good day to take God's hand, to rise up again, and sing God's praises freely.

In the name of Jesus Christ,
Amen

⁵ "There is a Way" *Newworldson*, Newworldson, (Inpop Records: 2009). Lyrics found (6-1-18) on <https://www.azlyrics.com/lyrics/newworldson/thereisaway.html>