

Pastor Roy's sermon from Oct. 21, 2012

Readings: Isaiah 53:4-12, Ps. 91:9-16, Hebrews 5:1-10, Mark 10:35-45

Grace, mercy, and peace to you from God our Father and the Lord Jesus Christ.

Heritage. Who are we? From where have we come. Who are our ancestors. Who taught them to believe and work hard and love with all their might. Heritage stories tell us who we are. True, honest heritage is perspective.

Today, we need some perspective. Even as our foremothers and fathers needed perspective to save them from their assumptions and instincts. We value many things, most of our values are lifegiving and hopefilled. But some of our ways steal away our life, our peace, our sense of place in this world. We have a desire to be entertained, for speedy service, convenience, effortless processes, we have an over the top need to provide for ourselves in the future with or without God or family or neighbor. Our system of peak efficiency has left us longing for community, longing for friendship, rather than the feeling that we are a commodity with a number to be traded at someone else's convenience. With travel and communication easier than it's ever been in the past, have these increased meaning and communion in our lives and in our world? Planting and harvest happen with unimaginable efficiency. Medical technology extends our lives with regard to quantity, but what about quality of life. Why do we do what we do? Can our ancestors speak to us and ask us questions that will help us find our way?

Our ancestors were by necessity much closer to the land than most are today. They were also much closer to their neighbors. Today, we imagine that we are islands of independence, separate from the rest of creation. Our environment is less a partner, a unity of life, and more a tool or a reality for our own pleasure. that our main relationships are with other people, everything else is a potential hindrance to what we wish to accomplish.

Do we pause to appreciate the lives of plants and animals which we consume along the way. Do we consider that the chicken, or steer, or vegetables are not that much different from our own flesh and bones? The farmer who held the chicken firmly, but with respect, or ended the life of a hog or steer to provide for food...these were in touch with realities which we tend to forget. Our foremothers who gave birth, much less assured than we that their children would reach adulthood, they had to trust. Sometimes we forget that we too have to trust

Our worship of efficiency and cheap products has degraded the life we seek to extend through these means. It's no wonder that many are lonely, that depression is rampant in our land, that we fear death as an enemy stranger because we're out of touch with the realities that surround us and are within us. So many distractions. Viewing life as a commodity rather than as communion is slowly killing us.

Are we willing to release our grasp upon the things we cannot keep, the things that do not infuse our lives with deep meaning? Are we willing to be led to a place where we can come to terms with our humanity, our frailty, our finiteness—that we are a vapor ready to be caught back up into the infinite when the creator calls, when the time comes for us to perceive the fullness of God's Reign?

Isaiah lifts up God's servant who is willing to lead through suffering and pain. Who is patient with whatever God grants, or removes. Who entrusts the seeming unfairness of life's chances and changes into God's care and safekeeping. Those who struggle to reflect, to believe, and to hope in the gift of God's grace and mercy for all, thereby, they and we find peace as Isaiah's suffering servant did, as our ancestors did, and as our Lord Jesus Christ did and was revealed to be the Son of God as he suffered patiently unto death and was resurrected.

Our ancestors in faith and by blood knew what it meant to work hard, every moment of their lives. They knew the raw pain of burying their loved ones who died long before old age set in. They knew what it meant to share with neighbors. They also knew what it meant to be interdependent. Yes, I'm sure they were stubbornly proud, but they had to give and receive freely or they would not have survived and learned to live in the abundance of God.

We often wish we had more of their stories. But I'm sure the stories which we hold dear are very similar to the ones which they held dear. So let us draw comfort in our own struggles of faith, of health, of family concerns. We are not alone. Let us draw deeply from the wells of our communion both with those with whom we share our journeys and with those who from the past have led us by their example, teaching, and mercy into the good presence of God.

Thanks be to God. Amen.