

**27<sup>th</sup> September, 2015**

**Reading:** Luke 11: 1 - 13

**Sermon:** **The source of Sustenance**

All too often, there are things happen in the world which leave us shocked and saddened. For a number of months now, the plight of the Syrian refugees has been on our television screens. We have been horrified at the loss of life. We have been upset by the faces of women and children who have been so exhausted, they have had no idea how they were going to keep going.

A few weeks ago there was the collapse of a crane on the temple in Mecca which killed about 170 people as they began their Hadj pilgrimage and again this week, over 1500 people were killed or injured on the final stage of their pilgrimage as they got trampled under foot.

Families and friends were worried sick about loved ones, not knowing if there were dead or alive. The numbers affected are huge but each one is someone's son or daughter, brother or sister, parent or friend.

Many people have been torn apart by the pain of loss and not just abroad. Our own community was saddened this week to hear of Georgia's death at the age of eighteen and yet as we speak her sister, Rebecca, will be heading for the swimming pool, if she is not already there, to take part in the triathlon. Rebecca is doing the triathlon in her sister's memory and in response to her sister's instructions. Georgia insisted that she do it and not waste the sixteen weeks of training that she had done.

Rebecca, who herself is only 21, has turned what is a tragedy into a blessing for other cancer sufferers by raising £4,805 for the Beatson since Thursday. Thanks to the generosity of family, friends and others in the community and beyond who have heard about her efforts, others who attend the Beatson will benefit in some way from the courage shown, not just by Georgia but by Rebecca. The total is set to rise and, to me, is reminiscent of the phoenix rising out of the ashes. Hope is born in the face of adversity.

Isn't that the story of the Cross, hope in the face of adversity? As Jesus hung on the Cross, He appealed to His heavenly Father to forgive those who had condemned Him as they had no idea what they had done. His gracious forgiveness offered hope to millions of people and continues to do so even today.

The Cross offers hope to us and to countless others, hope of life and of a future in the face of death but what about in life itself? Our faith is not about pie in the sky when you die. Our faith is about now as well as about the future. It's about today and the days to come.

There are others in the congregation and in the community who are worried about loved ones and who don't know what the future holds for them. Constant worry drains our inner resources. We wonder how we will keep going, how we will manage but we do.

There are some who have faith in the midst of the turmoil of their lives, some because of the turmoil and the distress, others despite it, and there are some who don't

have faith. They struggle on trying to pull themselves out of the pit into which they have fallen, trying to find meaning and hope and I feel so sorry for them because faith gives us hope, hope in the midst of life and in the face of death. God is ultimately our only hope.

In Psalm 55, the Psalmist says: **Cast your cares on the Lord and He will sustain you.** One of the definitions which is given of sustenance is this. Sustenance is the means of keeping body and soul together.

In our reading from Luke's Gospel, Luke speaks of food and of how we would give bread to a neighbour in need, even in the middle of the night. We might not be too thrilled when the door goes. We might be somewhat surprised that someone would come to our door in the middle of the night, but we wouldn't turn people who were hungry away with nothing.

It's as Luke says in the gospel, if a child asks his father for food, it is food that will be offered to the child, not a snake or a scorpion. But food, important as it is, only nourishes our bodies. To be sustained we need more.

Sustenance is about keeping body and soul together and that's where God comes in. **Cast your cares on the Lord and He will sustain you.** Our friends can feed us with food but God nourishes us and feeds our souls. In so doing, He will fill us with His Spirit so that we have the strength we need to face whatever befalls us.

How often have we heard people say: You get the strength from somewhere? That somewhere is God and

yet so often He goes unacknowledged but not by the Psalmist.

The writer of Psalm 55 is distraught. **My heart is in anguish within me; the terrors of death have fallen on me. Fear and trembling have beset me; horror has overwhelmed me.**

He is shaking with fear and crying out to God in his anguish. In his pain, he is every man and every woman. All of us go through times of fierce cruelty or of physical pain or mental torture. The solution seems so trite, so simple. **Cast your cares on the Lord and He will sustain you.**

The word that is used here in Hebrew for 'cares' is used only once in the whole Bible. It's a word that refers not just to the worry we have over one situation but to everything. The Psalmist is saying give everything over to God because worry consumes our whole being. Give everything over to God because He will give us what we need to carry us through.

That doesn't mean that God will take our pain away. That doesn't mean that everything will go back to normal or to the way it was before our world fell apart or before our worries and our anxieties kicked in. It means that God will sustain us. He will feed us whatever we need in the way of strength, peace, hope, love and compassion to cope with whatever comes our way.

There is no great revelation in what I am saying. We have heard it all before but sometimes we need to be reminded of the blessing of our faith, of the hope that is ours through Christ and of the peace which He grants us, a

peace which is beyond our comprehension. Sometimes we need to be reminded that all this is ours in the midst of trouble, in the midst of death and in the midst of life when we cast everything upon our Lord.

It's our God who holds body and mind together. Luke echoes the words of Jesus when He says: **Ask and it will be given to you; seek and you will find; knock and the door will be opened to you.** The God of our faith will answer our prayers by providing us with sustenance. Whatever we need will be given to us when we cast our cares upon the Lord.

It's in that faith that we are encouraged to step out into a new week, a week which will hold all sorts of opportunities and challenges, some we are expecting and some which will surprise us. What we need to know is that we can step out in confidence knowing that our God will sustain us and grant us His peace. **Through the love of God, our Saviour, all will be well.**