



Wednesday Prayer

18th Sunday after Pentecost – Restore us, O God

Restore us, O God of hosts; let your face shine, that we may be saved. You brought a vine out of Egypt; you drove out the nations and planted it. You cleared the ground for it; it took deep root and filled the land. The mountains were covered with its shade, the mighty cedars with its branches. Psalm 80:7-10

Reaching out to God in a time of community sorrow and grief, the Psalmist is asking for us to be restored. I looked up “restore” and found that it is to bring back, to give back, repair, rebuild. There is no doubt that we are in a time of community sorrow, a time in need of transformation. And there are so many differing messages around what this means and about who needs to do the hard work, the long-term work, to restore.

We too often tend to look away when it gets too hard, or when it doesn't directly impact our everyday lives. I'm reminded of when my daughter was very young, and if I wasn't listening intently to her, she'd grab my face and turn me directly to hers. She wanted my attention now. She wanted my action now.

How have we turned away? What is our inactivity?

Conversations around racial justice can be ignored (that doesn't impact me, I'm a nice person) or they can turn defensive (I'm not racist, why is it all my/our fault?), or they can be restorative (let's talk about what we're each doing to repair and rebuild relationships, communities, policies).

Conversations around preventing sexual exploitation can be ignored (that doesn't happen in my community, my kids are safe), or they can become overwhelming (it's just too big of a problem, how can I even make a difference?), or they can be restorative (tell me about how you're connecting with children and youth in your life and in your community...).

God has planted the vine and we are to tend it, in and through each other. Through wars and pandemics, political divides and racial injustice, through our long-term work to protect children and youth from sexual exploitation – God has always been there. When it seems we can't take one more hardship on top of all the others – God is still there. And God needs us to tend to the vine; our care needs to clear the ground for new growth, to keep the thorns away, dismantle those which have taken root, and provide life-giving water by way of our actions.

Restore us, O God. Bring us back to your will of tending to our communities, especially in times of sorrow and deep need. Guide our conversations and move us to action together, shining your love and grace upon us. Amen.

Written by Joy McElroy, Cherish All Children Executive Director, and community advocate for racial justice.