

THE FIRST 15

Tuesday, August 20, 2024

Please be in continued prayer for our team currently in Tanzania serving alongside Zoe Ministry. Today we pray for the expansion of Zoe into the new area of Uganda. To learn more, visit our website at fmcm.org/ZOE, or for the prayer guide go to fmcm.org/ZOE-Tanzania.

Today is Tuesday, August 20 and we are exploring how God's goodness and mercy follow us.

OPENING PRAYER

Blessed Lord God, thank You for loving me. I come to this quiet place and seek Your presence. I calm my scattered thoughts, release my worries and slow my breath. I focus on the goodness and mercy You promise. The goodness and mercy that follow me. Great Shepherd of my soul, open the ears of my heart to hear the message You have for me today. Amen.

SCRIPTURE

But this I call to mind, and therefore I have hope: The steadfast love of the LORD never ceases, his mercies never come to an end; they are new every morning; great is your faithfulness. Lamentations 3:21-23 (NRSV)

REFLECTION

We endeavor to comprehend what David meant when he penned the words of the Psalm, "Surely goodness and mercy shall follow me." It doesn't take a great deal of living to recognize how God follows us. When we wander from paths of righteousness, stubbornly choose our own way, rashly respond with harsh words, determinedly push ourselves into thorny circumstances and unintentionally bring harm to ourselves and others, God follows us. When we become lost and separated from the flock, encounter predators, find ourselves in danger and become injured, God follows us. Like a good shepherd, He follows us into places of trouble, valleys of darkness, times of grief and places of sorrow. He follows us with goodness. He follows us with mercy. He rescues us when we need rescuing. He heals us when we need healing. He patiently repairs what we break and mend what we've torn.

Today's scripture from the Old Testament book of Lamentations is from a small psalter of communal laments over the city of Jerusalem following its complete and utter destruction by the Babylonians in 587 BC. Despite the horrible situation following the overthrow of their beloved city the people have hope because of God's faithfulness. The steadfast love of the Lord never ceases (Lamentations 3:22a). The Hebrew word *hesed* is translated into English as great love or steadfast love. *Hesed* refers to God's covenantal love. God is a God of goodness and mercy. His loyal love and compassion enfolded Israel as they enfold us today.

"The steadfast love of the Lord never ceases, his mercies never come to an end; they are new every morning" (Lamentations 3:22-23). Every day presents a new opportunity to experience a fresh outpouring of God's love and grace. God is consistent and we can depend on Him. This understanding of God results in a people who have hope. Even when we are distressed,

despondent, oppressed or sorrowful, we find hope. A hope that is rooted in a God of goodness and mercy.

God has been faithful in the past and we can count on God to be faithful in the future. As people of God, we have the perspective of looking back over our lives and seeing how God was at work, even in the most difficult times. We can trust God is with us in the present and that God will be with us in the future. Like the people who sang the ancient words of Lamentations – even in times of darkness, times of lament, times of sorrow, times of fear, times of sin, times of disappointment and times of trouble, our confidence is in God! We hold out hope. We are not alone, God is with us. Great is Thy Faithfulness Lord, Great is Thy Faithfulness!

Ask: How have I experienced God's faithfulness in the past? How can I have hope of God's faithfulness in my current and future circumstances?

Pause and Pray

CLOSING PRAYER

Lord God, great is Your faithfulness! In all the circumstances of my day, I have hope. I hold onto Your promises of love and mercy. Whatever troubles I encounter, whatever worries I clutch, whatever fears I carry, whatever burdens I bear, whatever heartaches I hide, I have hope. I hope in your great love and steadfast faithfulness. I know you were with me in the past, bringing goodness and mercy into my life and I know you will be with me in the future working all things together for good and following me with love and mercy all the days of my life. Amen.