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Title: Summer in the Psalms: (dis)Connected

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Text: [Psalm 25:10-22](#)

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Today we conclude a four-week series called *Summer in the Psalms*. The 150 Psalms are scripture that captures the full spectrum of human emotion and human condition. We've merely begun to scratch the surface of all that the Psalms have to offer us in terms of what it means to be alive in the world today.

I want to start today with this statement, and I want you to think about the time for which this statement is made: This is a dangerous and difficult time of great dislocation and disorientation for people. This is what we will feel when the world comes to an end.

This statement could describe several different periods of time, including the time we are living in right now. Over the last couple of years, it has been a time of great dislocation and disorientation for many.

The statement was made by biblical scholar Walter Brueggemann to describe the setting for Psalm 25, which is a plea for God to notice, a plea for deliverance, a plea for God to see the palmist fully.

We hear this plea most clearly in verse 16:

"Turn to me, God, and have mercy on me because I'm alone and suffering" (Psalm 25:16 CEB).

This is someone who has become disconnected—disconnected from others and disconnected from God. It speaks to a moment or a season in life when we feel invisible. Maybe we don't want to feel this way or maybe we want to feel this way. We desire to be disconnected.

Coming on the heels of the last few years and all that the last few years contained, we are in a time of great dislocation, disorientation, and disconnection.

It may be the isolation experienced during the COVID-19 pandemic, the changing of routines and patterns. It could be the lost relationships due to the political divisions or perhaps the loss of hope with all going on in the world.

Simply put, we aren't the same people were in early March 2020. Our social spaces aren't the same as they were in March 2020. We've lost a great deal of what Robert Putnam calls social capital.

I read about an Oregon Fire Department that for years had a very successful fundraising breakfast. They were not able to hold the breakfast in 2020, and in 2021 and 2022 the attendance was way down, about 40 percent of what it used to be. The fire department said that for 2023, their slogan for the breakfast was going to be, "Come to our breakfast and we will come to your fire."

We are disconnected.

Church leaders are trying to figure this out as well. Some of the trends we were seeing have simply accelerated at a high rate over the last couple of years.

Prior to the pandemic, most studies reported somewhere between 32 and 38 percent of adults in the United States attended a Christian service of worship on a regular basis. In June of this year, only 67 percent of that number attended a service in-person or watched a service online.

In mainline churches, such as Geist, the post-COVID in-person attendance is about 50 percent of what it was in 2019. That does not account, of course, for those people worshipping online.

People are disconnecting.

Of course, it's not only in the church where this is happening. The last few years have become known as The Great Resignation in the workplace. In 2021 alone, over 47 million American workers quit their current jobs. Isolation, loneliness, were at all-time highs. A time of dislocation, disorientation, and disconnection.

You may be saying to yourself, "I came to church today to hear some good news. Where is the Good News?" Well, here it is:

We've been here before. And more importantly, God has been here before. We know this because of scriptures such as Psalm 25 and because we know the nature of God.

In this moment, hear these words that God's people have heard time and time again:

"I offer my life to you, Lord. My God I trust you
Make your ways known to me, Lord;
Teach me your paths.

Lead me in your truth- teach it to me-
Because you are the God who saves me.
I put my hope in you all day long.” (Psalm 25:1-2a, 4-5 CEB)

In these words, we hear the good news that God has been here before. We hear that no matter what, we are not invisible to God. No matter how you feel, even if it feels like everything is shifting beneath you, if you feel invisible or if you feel like maybe you don't need God, God sees you. God loves you. And it is God that is holding your life. It is God that is holding the life of the church.

We offer our lives to God because he first so generously offered us the gift of true life.

One stat I didn't share with you earlier is that during the last couple of years, nearly 40 percent of clergy thought seriously about leaving ministry. I served at Geist seven months before the pandemic began, and we not only were leaning into a new ministry but a new model of ministry, a new model of senior leadership for the church. And then everything changed. And as time went along, it was apparent this wasn't a short pause where we would just pick up and continue the road we were on.

I was talking with my counselor one day and talking about trying to figure out church and how to get on track and even what on track looked like or meant and I said, “I just can't get my footing.”

And I share with you what he said to me: “Why are you in such a rush? Wouldn't you rather find the footing that God wants you to find rather than just any footing?”

It reminded me what Psalm 25 reminds me: To find new orientation, to find new direction first requires us to rediscover connection with the source of life. I think it's why the psalmist begins with “I offer my life to you, Lord.”

It always begins with that. As we seek to find footing, it always begins with that. “I offer my life to you.”

I like this quote from C.S. Lewis: “My idea of God is not a divine idea. It has to be shattered from time to time. I'm still learning that my ideas about God are not divine.”

We are still connected to God, even when it feels like God has disconnected. There is no rush because God is the constant source of life. God is always, always present.

I like what Emily Freeman said about this recently on her podcast, *The Next Right Thing*:

“If you have been struggling to find your own footing, if your ideas about God or the way you practice your faith or the way you engage your faith community have been cracked or shattered, maybe you'll find comfort in knowing that God is divine, but your ideas about God are not. And so good news, you can hold them lightly.”

It's why the Psalmist says, "Make your ways known to me, Lord. Teach me your paths, Lord."

I'll close with this challenge: If you have been struggling to find your footing, feeling disconnected, please know that you are not the only one. I suspect most, if not all, of us have felt just a little disoriented over the last few years. But I believe that through God, through Jesus Christ, we as a church have something to offer. We have something to offer to those who are here and those who are not here.

I shared numbers earlier about those who have felt disconnected from church during the last few years. I believe one simple invitation can make a difference. And if we believe that together we can make a difference, then this matters.

In research, 41 percent of the formerly churched said they would return to the local church if a friend or acquaintance invited them. Younger adults are even more influenced by the power of the invitation. Approximately 60 percent of those 18–35 would consider returning to church if someone they knew asked them to come back.

You see, we long to belong. We want to know that we matter and that we are a part of something bigger than ourselves.

Your invitation to someone, is an invitation to church, but it is also so much more. It's an invitation to know that they matter, an invitation to be part of something so much bigger than just ourselves.

Let us pray.