

October 28, 2012

Psalm 95: 1-7

This first passage is called an enthronement psalm. This means it was used as a part of the celebration when a new king was crowned. In this case, it is not just any old king, but the king above all kings. This psalm praises the one who is worthy to be worshipped.

- ¹Come, let's shout praises to GOD,
raise the roof for the Rock who saved us!
²Let's march into his presence singing praises,
lifting the rafters with our hymns!
³And why? Because GOD is the best,
High King over all the gods.
⁴In one hand he holds deep caves and caverns,
in the other hand grasps the high mountains.
⁵He made Ocean—he owns it!
His hands sculpted Earth!
⁶So come, let us worship: bow before him,
on your knees before GOD, who made us!
⁷Oh yes, he's our God,
and we're the people he pastures, the flock he feeds.
Drop everything and listen, listen as he speaks.

Colossians 2: 2-4

Paul wrote this letter to the Colossians while he was in prison. Some people assumed that his imprisonment meant that he was powerful and, perhaps, didn't really speak with authority. The words that follow are Paul's attempt to counter what he saw as false teaching aimed to discredit him. Instead, he calls for the Christian community to stand firm and united in the face of opposition. He calls for them to be knit together or woven in a tapestry or holding ranks or being a network of ligaments. Whatever translation of this passage you read, the message is clean faith thrives, and we thrive as believers when we steadfastly together.

²I want you woven into a tapestry of love, in touch with everything there is to know of God. Then you will have minds confident and at rest, focused on Christ, God's great mystery. ³All the richest treasures of wisdom and knowledge are embedded in that mystery and nowhere else. And we've been shown the mystery! ⁴I'm telling you this

because I don't want anyone leading you off on some wild-goose chase, after other so-called mysteries, or "the Secret."

Hear what the Spirit is saying to the church.

THANKS BE TO GOD!

Sermon – "Don't break ranks"

As a child I attended Brownies, Girl Guides and Cadets.

Wrestled with learning knots – at that time = an essential part of Guiding??!

Reef

Clove hitch

Bowline

Anchor hitch

Cleat hitch

At the time I learned all the helpful aids that sounded like: "the rabbit runs around the tree and through the hole... "

Learning knots meant getting a badge... then I quickly moved on.

Some years later I bought a Whistler sailboat.

Before you get visions of yachts in your heads, it was a 14 ft. Dinghy with mainsail and jib – I took sailing lessons from RHYC and... Suddenly those knot sessions at Girl Guides proved useful.

The value of well-tied knots really hit home a few years later when I was out sailing on Lake Erie – a sudden storm blew up as it often does on this relatively shallow lake.

In order to stay safe I had to trust that the knots securing the sails to the mast were secure – that the knot attaching the anchor to the boat would hold us steady if we went over, that the knots holding the sail lines to the cleats would stay put as I fought to keep afloat.

When Paul wrote to the Christian community at Colossae while he was in prison in Rome he said: "I want you woven in a tapestry of love" other translations suggest "knit together" or "holding ranks."

The message is stay together, stay secure, keep safe, set yourselves together in such a way that you can move forward with confidence in what you are doing.

While the United Church Women is celebrating their 50th anniversary, the story did not begin there – before them were the WA and WMS who offered a place for women to grow in their faith in secure fellowship with other women in the congregation and where they could offer valued service in fundraising, pastoral care, local and foreign missions.

All of this in a time when women were not in ministry, not on church boards.

UCW is a place where women can weave Paul's tapestry of love -> formed and securing the colourful threads of the diverse lives, experiences and gifts into a picture of strong faithfulness.

Reading Paul's passage took me back to a recent visit to Scotland and tour of Stirling Castle.

7 huge (12' x 14') tapestries have been lovingly made. The original 15th century ones, now housed in the Met in New York City. (brought by J.D. Rockefeller in 1937)

The tapestry project which adorns the Queen's Inner Hall of the Palace, has been a key part of Historic Scotland's work over the past decade – it took years of work by a team of weavers and millions of dollars to recreate the beauty of these treasures.

105 shades of thread

Team of weavers advance 2.4 centimeters per week.

Tapestries are pictures made in thread – a process that wed's weaving and needlepoint – to create stunning scenes.

Paul's call to "weave a tapestry of love" has been reflected in UCW work – my Mom came home with balls of thread and knitting needles in the early 1960's – the five of us Wilson kids were taught to knit a garter stitch and help Mom make miles of bandages to go to a UCW sponsored leprosy mission in India.

Our UCW here has continued the tradition of making baptismal blankets, lapghans for folks entering nursing homes and blankets for Canada, providing warmth to homeless people in shelters across the country.

Paul's hope was that we take the message of Jesus, that we are loved and called by God to work for goodness and peace, AND that we gather ourselves together in secure, safe, groups.

In groups we can affect change.

In groups we can have a strong voice

In groups we can find laughter, fun, joy, hope.

All those ropes on my boat would have done me no good in that storm had they not been securely tied together.

It's how we work best as Christians – in congregations, in study groups, in SS, in AOTS, and as we celebrate today, in UCW.

This is a day, as the writer of Psalms has urged us, to shout, sing and worship. God whose love for us, revealed in Jesus, has transformed who we are and what we do for others.

We praise God for the generations of women who have led us in faith.