

ANAHEIM COMMUNITY CONNECTION (ACC) for September 13, 2020

Our focus for worship today is: *The Depth of God's Lovingkindness*

I. OPENING PRAYER:

Pray that we will understand the depth of God's love, faithfulness, righteousness and justice and respond with holy reverence.

II. COMMUNITY CONNECTION:

Think of places where you have traveled or visited. What were the highest, lowest, strongest, deepest places that you have visited?
Choose one of those places that changed your perspective and help you consider God's greatness in a grander way.

III. CHRIST CONNECTION: PSALM 36

A. THE DEPTH OF OUR SELF-CENTERED DEPRAVITY

¹ Transgression speaks to the ungodly within his heart; There is no fear of God before his eyes. ² For it flatters him in his own eyes Concerning the discovery of his iniquity and the hatred of it. ³ The words of his mouth are wickedness and deceit; He has ceased to be wise and to do good. ⁴ He plans wickedness upon his bed; He sets himself on a path that is not good; He does not despise evil.

Psalms 36 shows two contrasting pictures: the nature of the wicked (1-4) and nature of God. The opening verses bring into focus various aspects of the ungodly: *His Heart. His Eyes. His Words. His Plans.* For his heart, sin is his muse. It whispers pleasures that resonates with his wants and desires. Sin speaks to cravings of the heart and he listens to it. From the heart, the Psalmist moves to his eyes - eyes that have no regard for God. Eyes that look into his life without a terror of God's judgement. He may acknowledge God's existence but has no fear of the consequences of a rebellious life against him. Why is this so? It is because the center of his universe is himself. He flatters himself, or deceives himself, that his sin will not be found out or judged. It is a self-deception (*in his own eyes*) that convinces sin should not be hated or detested. In a way, he fails to see the ugliness of sin but cherishes it with impunity. From the eyes come what is expressed through the mouth and the hands. Deception is not only for himself, but for others. He lies to others to achieve his own self-centered purposes. His actions are without understanding (*be wise*) or blessing (*do good.*) As God is the only source of good, this man's agenda moves further and further away from anything that is good. He cannot even discern what is evil any longer. What is evil appears right in his eyes, yet he does not despise it but embraces it. Lest we be too quick, we must see that this wickedness was also our nature – our nature without God's saving work on our souls. We were that man. If we have not yet received God's gift of salvation, then we are still that man.

- How does sin speak to your heart? Compare how sin spoke to your heart before you turned to Christ and after your heart was changed by Christ?
- How does self-deception can lead humanity to live without fear of God? What ways do we sinners deceive ourselves regarding the ugliness of sin?
- Imagine your life had God not captured your heart for Himself. Describe that kind of life. How is that different from your life today?

B. THE EXPANSE OF GOD'S GLORIOUS CHARACTER

⁵ Your lovingkindness, O LORD, extends to the heavens, Your faithfulness reaches to the skies. ⁶ Your righteousness is like the mountains of God; Your judgments are like a great deep. O LORD, You preserve man and beast. ⁷ How precious is Your lovingkindness, O God! And the children of men take refuge in the shadow of Your wings. ⁸ They drink their fill of the abundance of Your house; And You give them to drink of the river of Your delights. ⁹ For with You is the fountain of life; In Your light we see light.

From verse 4 to verse 5, there is an abrupt change in focus as it moves from the dark depths of depravity to the holy heights of God's glory. Note how David uses repetitive statements to show the disparity between wicked humanity and the greatness of God in those 2 verses. David repeats the pronoun "He" 4 times in succession and employs that same tool when referring to God by using "Your" also in succession. In describing the ungodly: *He has ceased...to do good, He plans wickedness, He sets himself on a path that is not good, He does not despise evil* in comparison to *Your lovingkindness, Your faithfulness, Your righteousness, Your justice.* The contrast is as stark as night is to day or darkness to light. In distinction from the self centered and finite ways of man, we see the expressions of God's character as limitless: *to the heavens, to the skies, like the mountains, like a great deep.* What David is describing is the inexhaustible character of our Lord.

Your lovingkindness, O Lord extends to the heavens: When we think our Lord's mercy cannot cover our failings, trespasses or brokenness, it goes even further still. His love goes way beyond what we would anticipate. A love that extends to the edges of the universe, which is unknowable.

Your faithfulness reaches to the skies: Every promise of God is true and carried out as He said. Search His Word and there is no contradiction. It will show again and again that He is true to His Word. From prophecy to judgement or from promise to admonishment, every Word shows the faithfulness of God never fails.

Your righteousness is like the mountains of God: Mountains are immovable rocks. But these are not just any mountains, they are His mountains. The mountains of God will never move. Similarly, He will always do right and act consistent with His character. Also, the righteousness that covers our sin will never be shaken. It is solid as a mountain.

Your judgments are like a great deep: This is the vindication of God for His people. This is the judgement on the rebellious. All are completely wise and unfathomable.

The second half of these verse depict the experience of those in relationship with our glorious God. The blessing, peace, joy, life and light characterizes the lives of all who God graciously calls as His children. Under His providence, we feel the assurance of His care and protection. In His arms, we experience the peace in His refuge. In His house, we receive His abundance. In the flow of river, we are enlivened because He delights in us. There is an overflow of blessing. Like a fountain bursting forth, we declare the cry of all our united hearts: *How precious is Your lovingkindness, O God!* It is precious because we don't deserve it. It is precious because we were the depraved, now made His delight. All by His grace. All by His gospel. All through His Son. How precious indeed!

- Share how you can attest to infinite reaches of the lovingkindness, faithfulness, righteousness and judgements of God. What ways have you experienced its reality?
- During difficulty seasons of your life, how have you found refuge in His wings? How have you felt His delight? How have you seen the fountain of life by knowing Christ?

C. THE ASSURANCE OF HIS PRESERVING PROTECTION

¹⁰ O continue Your lovingkindness to those who know You, And Your righteousness to the upright in heart. ¹¹ Let not the foot of pride come upon me, And let not the hand of the wicked drive me away. ¹² There the doers of iniquity have fallen; They have been thrust down and cannot rise.

Even with all the abundance of life, joy and peace in God's presence, David knows his own heart. Like all of us, it is still prone to wonder. Our own pride may try to stamp on us or cause us to fall. Even the allure of the worldly life will try to move us. In verse 12, David looks over the precipice into the valley of the future and sees the wicked totally defeated. Those that touted no fear of God now conquered by the Glory of God. Knowing the final analysis, David prays for God to *continue Your lovingkindness* and *continue Your righteousness*. *Continue* means to carry or to seize. In a way, the Psalmist asks for God's love to hold Him and preserve Him. That same lovingkindness that reaches to the heaven will hold him. That same rock-solid righteousness will preserve him. He knows he is prone to fall, but knows God will not fail him. Seize my heart with Your love. Carry my life with Your righteousness. That is not just David's prayer, but the very cry of all of our hearts.

- How does your pride cause you to stumble? In what ways does the world's allure tempt you?
- Pray for God's love and His righteousness to be your protection against your own faltering heart.

EXODUS 20:1-17

As we continue our study on the Lord's Day – the Sabbath day – we are reminded that it is His day. He has designated it as holy. We are to keep it holy. Keep it separate. It is not for our agenda, but for His.

- What is usually on your agenda for Sunday? After hearing God's instruction from His Word, does the particulars of that agenda change?
- How are you serving Him on His day?
- What is He placing on your heart as you received His Word this morning?

IV. CARE CONNECTION:

Spend time praying for:

- His lovingkindness experienced in our lives and shown through our lives as we live for His purposes
- Unity in the church
- Care needs / concerns
- Unbelieving friends & family
- All affected by COVID virus & illnesses
- Worship & Special Events Ministry