

Pastor Roy's Sermon from August 31, 2014 (Labor Day Outdoor Service)

Children—This is labor day weekend, so let's talk about labor. What is your job? Do your parents ask you to do a job around the house? I think the first job I did was to gather the trash on trash days because the trash truck came twice a week. I did the dishes (took turns). Sometimes I got to do something fun like chop wood or dig a shallow drainage ditch so the crawl space wouldn't flood. My least favorite job was to pull weeds, especially rose of Sharon sprouts. My most favorite was helping replace a roof. Hammer, tar paper and shingles, 4 nails per shingle.

Jeremiah was disappointed with God. He tasted the Word of the Lord, he trusted the word of the Lord. He followed the way of justice and mercy. He did not join in the shame of those who stood for prosperity and pleasure at the cost of others. He did not embrace the lifestyles of those who cared first for themselves, then for others with what was left over. So he often stood alone. Following the Word of the Lord did not result in immediate happiness and freedom from trouble. He was lonely and filled with pain. He speaks of his faith in God as a stream that stops flowing when it is the hottest and driest.

In this dialogue, how does God respond? Does God say, "Jeremiah, here have some friends," or "Sure, I'll give you happiness?" No, God says, "Continue to be faithful, keep living the truth. Israel will turn to you. You and your words will last. I will save you. I will deliver you. I will redeem you from greed and injustice."

As Jeremiah trusts in *God's* faithfulness, God's faithfulness surrounds *him*. God's invitation to Jeremiah is to release it all back to God. To let it go. To trust.

Jesus describes "letting it go" as taking up our cross and following him. "Just embrace it." Seems odd, but if we can trust in God's mercy more than in our need for everything to work out the way we want it to, therein lies our freedom and peace. Trust allows us to agree with Paul to "Bless those who persecute, bless and not curse; rejoice with the rejoicing, weep with the weeping, live in harmony with one another, live, so far as it depends on you, peaceably with all. Never repay evil for evil, but leave it all to God.

Labor day is a pause to remember those who have paved the way for others to earn a decent wage. Jeremiah and Jesus would have been glad for a holiday about fair wages and justice for the people. The heroes of labor day are those who were willing to sacrifice for the good of others. Jeremiah and the other prophets spoke out on behalf of those who needed a fair wage. They had learned along with many others throughout time the joy of sharing, the goodness of living in community—giving and receiving as it should be. If we give too much, we run dry. If we receive too much we burst from within.

This Labor Day weekend, may we think creatively about how we can give and receive with justice and mercy, with gladness and joy. May we celebrate the life God has given us without fearfully attempting to seize more of it than is our fair share. This is the challenge of our living.

