

Sermon Cathedral 31-12-2020

1 Lord, you have been our refuge from one generation to another.

2 Before the mountains were brought forth, or the land and the earth were born, from age to age you are God.

Psalm 90:1-2

My brothers and sisters in Christ once again we have come to the end of one year and await the coming of another. We know what the passing year was like but we do not know what the future holds. In faith we will launch into the coming year as Isaac Watts the hymn writer states:

1 O God, our help in ages past,
our hope for years to come,
our shelter from the stormy blast,
and our eternal home;

2 beneath the shadow of thy throne
thy saints have dwelt secure.
Sufficient is thine arm alone,
and our defense is sure.

3 Before the hills in order stood,
or earth received her frame,
from everlasting thou are God,
to endless years the same.

4 A thousand ages in thy sight
are like an evening gone,
short as the watch that ends the night
before the rising sun.

5 Time, like an ever-rolling stream,
bears all its sons away;
they fly forgotten, as a dream
dies at the opening day.

6 O God, our help in ages past,
our hope for years to come,

be thou our guard while troubles last,
and our eternal home.

This hymn is based on Psalm 90 from which my text is taken. The psalm refers to a period in Israel's history as they journeyed to the promised land. However, it addresses a moment of crisis when the Israelites were already in the promised land. You see they responded to crisis by gathering at the temple/ holy place, this act of worship was led by the priests assisted by others.

Passionately, they presented/communicated the matter in prayer to God to seek God's help and deliverance.

We note that the psalm begins by acknowledging and praising God as the one in whom they have found refuge from one generation to another. It also speaks of God as pre-existing creation: "Before the mountains were brought forth, or the land and the earth were born, from age to age you are God." In the psalm this is contrasted with the shortness and frailty of human life.

3 You turn us back to the dust, and say, "Go back, O child of earth."

4 For a thousand years in your sight are like yesterday when it is past, and like a watch in the night.

5 You sweep us away like a dream; we fade away suddenly like the grass.

6 in the morning it is green and flourishes; in the evening it is dried up and withered."

The psalm stresses that God is eternal or everlasting while we human beings are temporal; we are but a fleeting breath. It pleads for God to grant that we may acknowledge the sovereignty of God and to submit ourselves to Him, as we reflect on the troubles, difficulties and crises of life and that we may discern how to cope with and manage the shortness and frailty of human life. Then there is a plea with God for compassion in these trying circumstances. The Psalm affirms that God is the one who can provide the hope for renewal in these situations and emphasizes that the significance of human life is found in God.

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As we look back at the year 2020 individually and collectively, we can identify moments of joy, success, achievements, growth, progress and celebration. At the same time there were moments of sorrow and sadness, failure, loss and decline, regression and grief. The year 2020 generally speaking was filled with challenges the social, economic, spiritual, emotional, intellectual, physical and psychological impact of the COVID-19 Pandemic and Dengue fever on the health of our nation is one that will remain with us for a long time.

We can think of the stimulus package which government created for various sectors of our populace who loss their jobs, the business places which closed their doors as a result of the pandemic, the decline of the tourism sector and the effect this has had on hotels, restaurants, taxi drivers. The demise of LIAT which is now in Administration. We can also think of our entertainers, craftsmen and women and artiste and the cancellation of Vincy Mas which have impacted our mas-men and women, calypsonians, pan-men and women and other sectors of the society.

One cannot forget the challenge to our education system when classes had to be held online and further the CXC/CSEC and Cape examinations and the several complaints and applications for reviews which followed after the results were received. We must commend and give thanks to God for those in the Ministry of Education, and particularly our teachers for their understanding, care, commitment and dedication and their willingness to go the extra mile. I can speak specifically of teachers in Anglican Schools throughout the diocese: Here in St. Vincent and the Grenadines, Grenada and St. Lucia.

In spite of the Corona Virus pandemic there was a vigorous and robust campaign leading up to the general elections held in the month of November.

What a year this would have been for those in the frontline charged with the responsibility of managing the response to the pandemic; the Ministry of Health, the doctors and other health practitioners, Immigration and customs officials and others. We give thanks to God for their commitment and dedication and pray God continued guidance and protection on them.

The challenges of this year have also had its impact on religious organisations. Churches were affected as well when most of them suspended gathering together for worship in response to pandemic and also had to make adjustments to

programmes and activities including their ministry to the most vulnerable among us- the poor and needy, the unemployed and the aged and infirmed. The regular visitation of the aged, sick and shut-ins was also suspended on the advice of health officials. Further, the Church's ministry to the poor and needy, the unemployed aged and infirmed was also impacted for church members who contribute to these ministries are among those who have lost their jobs or sources of income. Nevertheless, by the grace of God the Church has continued to fulfill this ministry.

Now as we come to the end of the year, we hear of the possibility of community spread of the Corona virus here in St. Vincent and the Grenadines and of effusive eruptions at La Soufriere, Volcano. With all of the above along with the other challenges and circumstances of life what a year this has been.

However, time rolls on and soon we will be into the New Year 2021

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As we enter into the year 2021 let us pray that God may have mercy upon us and that we continue to place our trust in God, our creator and redeemer, for God is the one who can provide the hope for newness of life and take us through these trying times.

Trying circumstances generally speaking calls us to work together and to be our brothers and sisters' keepers. This is fundamental to the Christian Faith as the psalm emphasizes may we acknowledge the shortness and frailty of human life and discern the significance of the days we receive here on earth. This present situation calls us to acknowledge our common humanity for it has implications for and has affected all of us in one way or another.

The way forward calls us first of all to acknowledge the sovereignty of God and as those in the frontline, managing the response to the pandemic, our health practitioners, immigration and customs officials, teachers and others have led the way, may we be prepared to sacrifice and be understanding, caring, and serve with commitment and dedication for the wellbeing of our nations. Integrity, credibility, honesty, righteousness, compassion, speaking the truth in love, patience, tolerance, working together and building and strengthening Community organisations, families, youth groups and clubs. These are central as we enter into 2021 and seek to address the challenges that confront us as we chart the way forward.

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