

“Not Lacking”

January 15, 2023

Psalms 40:1-11

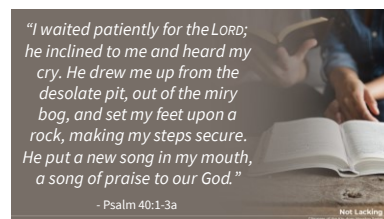
¹ I waited patiently for the LORD; he inclined to me and heard my cry. ² He drew me up from the desolate pit, out of the miry bog, and set my feet upon a rock, making my steps secure. ³ He put a new song in my mouth, a song of praise to our God. Many will see and fear and put their trust in the LORD. ⁴ Happy are those who make the LORD their trust, who do not turn to the proud, to those who go astray after false gods. ⁵ You have multiplied, O LORD my God, your wondrous deeds and your thoughts toward us; none can compare with you. Were I to proclaim and tell of them, they would be more than can be counted. ⁶ Sacrifice and offering you do not desire, but you have given me an open ear. Burnt offering and sin offering you have not required. ⁷ Then I said, “Here I am; in the scroll of the book it is written of me. ⁸ I delight to do your will, O my God; your law is within my heart.” ⁹ I have told the glad news of deliverance in the great congregation; see, I have not restrained my lips, as you know, O LORD. ¹⁰ I have not hidden your saving help within my heart, I have spoken of your faithfulness and your salvation; I have not concealed your steadfast love and your faithfulness from the great congregation. ¹¹ Do not, O LORD, withhold your mercy from me; let your steadfast love and your faithfulness keep me safe forever.

1st Corinthians 1:1-9

¹ Paul, called to be an apostle of Christ Jesus by the will of God, and our brother Sosthenes, ² To the church of God that is in Corinth, to those who are sanctified in Christ Jesus, called to be saints, together with all those who in every place call on the name of our Lord Jesus Christ, both their Lord and ours: ³ Grace to you and peace from God our Father and the Lord Jesus Christ.

⁴ *I give thanks to my God always for you because of the grace of God that has been given you in Christ Jesus,* ⁵ *for in every way you have been enriched in him, in speech and knowledge of every kind —* ⁶ *just as the testimony of Christ has been strengthened among you —* ⁷ *so that you are not lacking in any spiritual gift as you wait for the revealing of our Lord Jesus Christ.* ⁸ *He will also strengthen you to the end, so that you may be blameless on the day of our Lord Jesus Christ.* ⁹ *God is faithful; by him you were called into the fellowship of his Son, Jesus Christ our Lord.*

In Psalm 40, verses 1-3, we read: *“I waited patiently for the LORD; he inclined to me and heard my cry. He drew me up from the desolate pit, out of the miry bog, and set my feet*



upon a rock, making my steps secure. He put a new song in my mouth, a song of praise to our God.” As I consider these words, I am thankful. Now, as you read these words, and often when I read them, I think of times when I have cried out, of times when I have been in the desolate pit, of times when I feel in the clutches of a “miry bog.” In general these are not places or times when thankfulness is our first thought.

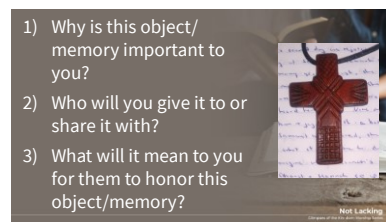
But my heart and mind turned to thankfulness because of how our church is about to reach out to folks who are presently enduring these times of difficulty and challenge. In just over a week, Financial Peace University will begin. This class offers hope and a plan for those struggling with managing their finances. And later in that same week we will open our doors and hearts to those participating in Life INC classes. The fellowship and education shared through both of these offerings will help people to feel like they have *“set my feet upon a rock, making my steps secure.”*

I am thankful that so many said “yes” to the call to engage others in our community. And I hope and pray that through these experiences they will say, *“He put a new song in my mouth, a song of praise to our God.”* Just as the times that God has drawn us up out of our desolate pit or miry bog have led us to celebrate with our God, I hope and pray that through our church others will come to know and experience this joy and hope. As we prepare to continue deeper into Psalm 40 and then into our passage from 1st Corinthians 1, growing in our understanding of how with God we are not lacking anything for the tasks set before us, let us begin with a word of prayer...



Each Sunday for this worship series the children will get a small stone with a drawing on it. The drawing connects to something of our faith – baptism for example. Monday on Facebook I posted a request for us to think about an object or memory that we could bring today that speaks to our faith – to who or what we are as a child of God. And I asked you to reflect on these three questions as a way to share about your object or memory. Here are the three questions and my object.

- 1) Why is this object/memory important to you?
- 2) Who will you give it to or share it with?
- 3) What will it mean to you for them to honor this object/memory?



Let me share my answers to these questions as we begin this time of sharing...

Thank you for sharing your stories of faith with me and with each other. These are stories of discipleship, of community, of rescue and restoration, of God's hand at work in our lives and in our world.

Tomorrow many people will celebrate Martin Luther King, Jr., Day. All but the youngest of us are familiar with Dr. King and for what he stood and fought for. He was a man that was not lacking in faith or trust in God. In the spirit of what we just shared with one another, imagine for a moment the stories that Rosa Parks or a city sanitation worker or most anyone else who spent time alongside Dr.

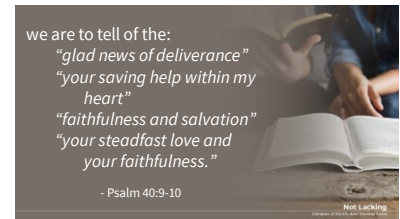


King would tell. The stories that we shared earlier, the stories we just imagined about Dr. King's life and faith – they all point to a kin-dom that is bigger than ourselves, to a kin-dom of love. As we continue to explore this kin-dom and our role in it, let us pray...

The common theme in our stories – in the life and story of Martin Luther King, Jr., in the stories told throughout the Bible – is to center our lives on God. Please turn with me to Psalm 40, to hear David's words of wisdom on how to keep God at the center of our lives. Picking up in verse 4, here David encourages us to focus on God alone. He writes, *"Happy are those who make the LORD their trust, who do not turn to the proud, to those who go astray after false gods."* Trust in God; don't look to proud or false gods. It is not about lacking anything or about having this special this or that. We must focus our trust on God. Turning to verse 8, we gain some insight into how to live this out, into how to focus in on God.

In verse 8 David writes, *"I delight to do your will, O my God; your law is within my heart."* When we desire to do God's will and not our own, when we seek to have God's word written on our very hearts, then our focus turns to doing God's will. As told again and again in the words of Jesus, God's will is for us to love God and to love neighbor. In verses 9 and 10 David shares how he lived it out and gives us a pattern to follow.

Here is David's advice: *"I have told the glad news of deliverance in the great congregation; see, I have not restrained my lips, as you know, O LORD. I have not hidden your saving help within my heart, I have spoken of your faithfulness and your salvation; I have not concealed your steadfast love and your faithfulness from the great congregation."* In summary form, here is what David did and what we are to do: we are to tell of the *"glad news of deliverance,"* we are to tell of *"your saving help within my heart,"* we are to tell of God's *"faithfulness and salvation,"* and we are to tell of *"your steadfast love and your faithfulness."* In short, we are to witness to our faith and to God's love. That is what we did as we began this time together, sharing stories of faith.

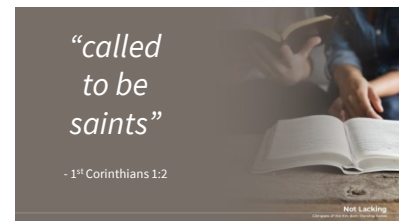


With this guidance in mind, let us turn to Paul's first reminder to the church in Corinth, to a group of people who were not lacking much. As we do so, I will say again what I've said before. We like to know what we are doing before we do it. We like to feel prepared, to be comfortable when we do something. We often devolve into thinking, if I only knew more, if I only had more. In terms of our faith, we can think, if I was only more like that preacher or more like that saint, then I could do great things for God. Yet, for me and maybe for you, part of me realizes that I am still learning, that I am still a work in progress. But from there, it is a short step to saying don't expect too much from me. It is an easy out to say that I am missing some knowledge, some skill, some resource. If I just had that thing, then all sorts of great things would happen. Oddly enough, though, this is not the attitude that Paul is dealing with in 1st Corinthians. You see, the Christians in the church in Corinth thought themselves better than the average believer.



The leaders in the church in Corinth believed that their ability to speak in tongues was a sign that they were more equipped, more favored, more blessed than those whose gifts were, well, more mundane, more basic. This gift, at least in their mind, elevated them above everybody else. So much so that they thought that they didn't have to listen to anyone except themselves. This is why Paul begins his letter by stressing his credentials. In the opening verse Paul states that he was *"called to be an apostle of Christ Jesus by the will of God."* This is a title and description that is hard to argue with. It is hard to ignore someone who was called by God to be an apostle of Jesus Christ.

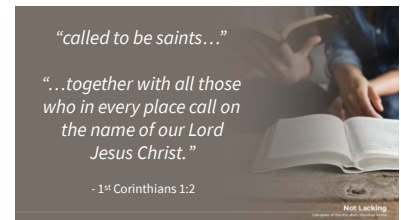
Paul gets right to the heart of the matter in verse 2. Here he reminds them that they were *"called to be saints."* Now, we might think calling them saints would just exacerbate the problem of arrogance. Yet for Paul, the word 'saint' means something different for us today. To Paul, though, a saint was one who recognizes their need for a savior. For Paul, a saint was someone who said 'yes' to Jesus Christ. Now, this made no guarantee that this person's behavior would be exemplary. That might be what we think today when we hear the word 'saint.' But for Paul, a saint was someone who was beholden to God, someone who was committed to a covenant relationship.



The idea of being beholden to God is a beautiful image. Beholden is not a word we use often today. It conveys an image of being wrapped up as well as of belonging. If we are beholden to God, then when we serve others, when we do for others, then God shows through more than we do because we are wrapped up in God's presence. When we do good, God shines out through us, revealing God to the world. In the letter, Paul is reminding the Corinthians that, first and foremost, they belong to God.

Paul is asking the Corinthians to examine whether or not their behavior, whether or not their attitudes, still fit the description of ‘saint.’ Arrogance leads us to believe that self is the center of everything. All else has to make way. If God is supposed to be the center, then arrogance has no place in the community of faith.

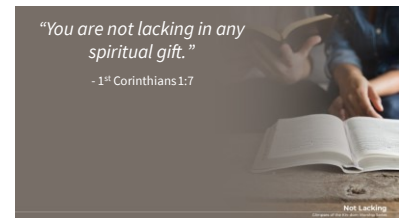
Paul is also reminding the Corinthians of something that we have touched on the last two weeks. The Corinthians were part of something bigger than themselves. In the call to walk in covenant with one another and in the foundations of baptism we were reminded of our commitment and connections to one another and to all of the catholic or universal family of God. In verse 2 Paul called them ‘saints’ and reminded them that they fulfill this calling *“together with all those who in every place call on the name of our Lord Jesus Christ.”* For Paul, the call was to all who believed in Jesus as Lord and Savior, and it was a call to witness to the same Lord and Savior. You see, the leaders in the church in Corinth did something we can all do. They remade Christ into their image instead of making themselves into Christ’s image. We too can seek to redefine Jesus in ways that are comfortable or specific to our life, to our needs, to our wants.



Paul calls the Corinthians, and he calls us, to something bigger than ourselves. When you consider *“all those in every place”* we begin to comprehend a larger view. It places things in the proper perspective as we consider what it means to live as a saint, as one who recognizes their need for a savior, as one beholden to Christ. These words apply to us today. They are a reminder, first, that we are called not to live by our own wisdom, by our own preferences, by our own prejudices, but to live by the call of God.

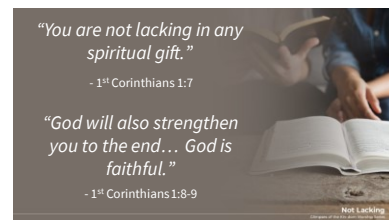
This all defines our vision of the kin-dom, of our connections, of our hopes and prayers and service to and for one another. Understanding the kin-dom and its scope, we come to recognize that we are all in this together. The kin-dom is not just about me or my church or my circles or even those who are like me. The kin-dom is about all people, all places, all communities, all nations. Here again we connect into the ideas of covenant and baptism. The kin-dom is about relationship and connection and community. It is about belonging and finding sacred worth in all people.

This charge can, at times, feel too big, too overwhelming, too demanding. This call to be saints, to be in connection and community with all who call on Christ as Lord and Savior, it can feel daunting. If you, like me, feel this at times, then Paul has a word for us today. First, it is that we are saints. We are the beloved of Christ, and we are filled with a Spirit that empowers us to live as ones who recognize our deep need for a savior. Second, Paul tells us today that we have been enriched because of our relationship with Christ – enriched in both speaking and in knowledge. He is not saying that we will be enriched, that we might be enriched, that we could some day be enriched. In verse 7 Paul reminds each of us: *“You are not lacking in any spiritual gift.”* Once we commit our lives to Christ, we have everything we need to be the Christian and the church that we are called to be.



Our text for today closes with two great truths of our faith. These are important to remember when we doubt our call, when we question our status as ‘saints,’ when we are unsure of how to witness to our faith.

In verses 8 and 9 we are told, *“God will also strengthen you to the end... God is faithful.”* We began this time together sharing some of the tangible proof that we have of these truths. Again, thank you to those who shared. For those that did not share, you too have proofs of God’s strength and faithfulness, of God’s presence in your life. Recall these, remember them, cling to them when necessary.



As we go forth, seeking to live into our call, seeking to bear witness to the one who is our Lord and Savior, may we carry these words of promise with us. God will strengthen us. God is faithful. My fellow saints, may it be so for us all. Amen and amen.

GPS – Grow, Pray, Study

- 1) *Grow*. How or when has your faith sought to bring good or to relieve a hardship for someone other than yourself? Why are we called to this kin-dom work?
- 2) *Pray*. “Saint” – *one who recognizes their need for a savior*. Pray for God to be at work in your heart so that you know this and live this ideal better and better.
- 3) *Study*. Read Matthew 4:1-11. How might these temptations empower Jesus in his efforts to build up a community of faith?