

2021 01 24 – Love is Ever Present

Psalm 62 (The Inclusive Bible)

Over this past week, I've been thinking a lot about this time in which we are living, this time of COVID-19. Due to the global pandemic, 2020 was a very challenging year. 2021 is just beginning, and so far, not a lot has changed. Many of us would argue that the worst part of this pandemic is the number of people who have died and the fear of getting sick both for ourselves and for those we love. Others would say that the biggest problem is the restrictions that governments are placing on our businesses, our leisure activities and our social interactions. Whether your biggest fear is related to health, finances or an attack on your civil liberties, I think we can all agree that one of the reasons this time in which we are living is so difficult is an overwhelming sense of powerlessness.

How long will you besiege me
as though I were a crumbling wall
or a tottering fence?

Like the ancient poet, we all know what it feels like to be a crumbling wall or a tottering fence. It's hard to put up any kind of defence when your enemy is one that you can't even see. We know what happens when COVID-19 is allowed to move without restrictions throughout a country, a province or even a care home. Over and over we have watched the news in horror as doctors and nurses have been forced to work in institutions that are literally crumbling under the weight of sickness and death. We have watched as people have been laid-off work and as businesses have closed their doors. We have watched as the number of active cases has risen, fallen and then risen even higher again.

They connived to push me off a cliff;
They delight in telling lies.
With their mouths they utter blessings,
But in their hearts they curse.

And we've wondered how much of what we are hearing is the truth and how much is lies. How did this pandemic really start? Did the World Health Organization do their job? How close are the numbers that we are seeing to reality? When will the COVID-19 vaccine be available in our city? What is the real reason behind its delay? Should we be blaming our government? If so, at what level? Or are they all just as powerless as we are?

What is power anyway? According to Wikipedia, "In social science and politics, power is the capacity of an individual to influence the actions, beliefs, or conduct of others." [https://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/Power_\(social_and_political\)](https://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/Power_(social_and_political)) So to be powerless is to be unable to influence anyone's actions including our own. We feel powerless when our actions are being dictated by an outside force, a force beyond ourselves.

Obviously we would all prefer to have at least some power. So where does power come from? We could create a list, couldn't we? A list that would include things like: money, education, race, age, gender, culture, and status. Countries obtain power through the size of their armed forces and the natural resources within their boundaries. Social and political power can come from all these sources and more.

But the psalmist wrote:

Do not trust in extortion,
or put false hopes in stolen goods;
do not set your heart on riches
even when they increase.

Wealth may give us some influence over others. It may help us obtain the COVID-19 vaccine before some of the poorer countries in the world. It may allow us to stay safe in our clean and uncrowded homes. But the problem is that wealth too often gains power over us. When we let money and possessions take over our hearts and our desires then we lose the very power that we were seeking – power over our own actions, our own thoughts, our own beliefs.

The psalmist makes it clear that true power comes from one source and one source alone:

For God has said only one thing,
only two do I know:
that to God alone belongs power,
and that you, YHWH, are loving –
you repay all people according to their deeds.

I would go one step further and say that the God of the New Testament, the God that Jesus came to tell us about, is not only loving but love itself. This is a God that doesn't "repay all people according to their deeds," but rather loves and forgives all people regardless of their deeds. My God, the Holy Mystery, the Ground of Our Being is not only loving, but is the Essence of Love. If I were re-writing these verses, I would say,

For that still small voice within me has said only one thing,
only two do I know:

that to Love alone belongs power,
and that God, the Holy Mystery, the Ground of Our Being
is the Essence of Love.

This Sacred Love, is not sentimental, romantic love, but rather, revolutionary love, the kind of love that gives us the strength and the courage to do what needs to be done in the face of a global pandemic. The kind of love that our doctors and nurses access every day when they go to work. The kind of the love that keeps us from gathering in large groups even when we are desperate to see our friends and family. The kind of love that helps us reach out to our neighbours in ways that are safe. The kind of love that leads us to write letters and emails and texts to let our governments know when we think they could do better. The kind of love that gives us the power to change our world.

Dr. Martin Luther King, Jr. put it this way:

What is needed is a realization that power without love is reckless and abusive and that love without power is sentimental and anemic. Power at its best is love implementing the demands of justice. Justice at its best is power correcting everything that stands against love.

<https://interactioninstitute.org/power-and-love/>

True power comes from within; it comes from that sacred place within each one of us; it comes from Love alone. Let's listen to the first verses of the psalm re-written using the word "Love" instead of "God."

In [Love] alone my soul finds rest,
For my deliverance comes from [Love];
[Love] alone is my rock, my salvation, my fortress:
I will never be shaken.

The power of Love, Sacred Love, is available to us at all times. It is up to us to tap into that Love. We can do that by being fully present—in heart, mind and body. We can do that through prayer, meditation, drumming, singing and walking. We can be fully present even while doing daily tasks such as washing dishes or gardening. We can do that through sacred ritual like our own celebration of communion. see <https://cac.org/about-cac/what-is-contemplation/>

When we feel powerless, that it is time to remember that we are not alone, that Sacred Love is Ever Present. When we feel powerless, that it is time to listen for that still small voice within each one of us. When we feel powerless, that it is time to rest our souls in God, the Essence of Love.

So be it. Amen.