



water from rock

Selah: Stop, Look, Listen – December 30, 2021

The Lord be with you.

Well, the new year is upon us. Old Father Time is limping out of the 2021 and baby new year, 2022 is about here.

At the end of every year, I always like to think back over the past year to remember some of the highlights and to celebrate, and to remember the Not So-highlights and to give them over to God's love and grace. And as we think about the old year and the year to come, I'd like to take a few moments to tell you about my mom, and to talk about something very important that I learned from her... Anyone who knew my mother, I think one of the first things that anyone would ever say of her is that Bernice Smith had a green thumb. I really do think that the grass grew up greener on our side of the fence because my mother had a way of making a desert bloom, bloom with roses, daisies, poppies, and more. My mom could coax beauty out of the stubborn cliche soil of the desert south past and I remember many of Sunday morning that my mother would go out into the yard and she would cut some of her beautiful flowers and she would arrange them and take them to our little church for the worship service.

Most people who knew my mother knew that she had a green thumb, what most people did not know was one of my mom's secrets as a gardener, they did not know that my mother had a compost pit that was out behind the house. And that into that compost pit my mom would put cuttings from the garden as grass clippings, piles of dead leaves, kitchen scraps, she would take all that stinky stuff that today we would call biodegradable waste, and my mom would go out looking for it, she would hunt it down, all that garbage to put into her compost pit, and then my mom would put some dirt over it and she would sprinkle water over it, and my mother would wait, she would wait. And as she waited, chemical change would begin to happen in that compost pit, and there was this metamorphosis, this transformation of all that junk, all that stinky stuff into rich, lush life-giving soil in the desert that made her garden rich and green. That was my mother's compost pit.

Today, on the verge of this new year, I'm looking at a Bible text that every time I read it, I think about my mom's compost pit because it's a verse that tells us that God has His compost... God's compost of redemption. I'm looking at Romans Chapter 8:28, where he says that we know that God works all things for good for those who love him, who are called according to His purpose. I like that as it says, We know that God works all things. Not some things, not most things, but we know



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that God works all things together for good. Please notice here that the Apostle Paul is not saying that all things that happen in our lives are good, he's not saying that because there were things that happened to you and me in this past year, that they weren't good, there was a lot of sin, there was a lot of injustice, pain, grief. Rather, what the apostle Paul is saying is that God works all things for good. You see, it is God who makes it turn out good, God knows how to take the garbage, she knows how to take to trash of our lives, all of our failures, our regrets or heartaches, and God knows how to work them for good.

I mean, that's stuff that I just prefer you not know about me, and that's stuff that you might not want anyone else to know about you, God knows how God specializes in knowing how to take all of that to the foot of the cross and to work it for our eternal good. But what is that good? Well, what is that good towards which God is working all things? Well, context here tells us that God works all things together for the purpose that we might be conformed to the image of His Son. God knows how to work all of those things, the good and the bad, to make us more like Jesus, to transform you and me to become more loving, more compassionate, more bold believing people, to share in the life and glory of Jesus Christ. Now, you and I could probably take good stuff that happens in our lives, and we could take the good and make something good out of it, but notice that God knows how to take even the bad stuff and then work it for His loving purpose for you and me. And making us more and more like Jesus. Why, Saint Augustine said of Romans 8:28, That God works even our sins together for His purpose. That's why we call him savior.

Some time ago, I was in church on a morning and it was time for the offering, and as the offering plate was being passed, it was like the Spirit of God nudges me and whispered to me and saying, Hey, Tim, it's not just your money, I want... It's not just your gifts and talents that I can use, but I want you to give to me your failures, your heart breaks, your regrets, give to me all that ugly stuff, and watch we go to work to bless you and to bless others.

My mom had her compost pit where she took the trash, the scraps, I mean, all the stuff that everybody else threw away, my mom would take that and she would work it for good. Hey, and I'm here to tell you today on the verge of 2022, that God will take all of that stuff into his compost pit of redemption, when God can take all that really ugly stuff in our lives, the garbage and he can work it, he can work it for our eternal good and for his glory. And that is after all the gospel.

I'm Tim Smith, a fellow traveler. Thanks for listening, until next time.