



water from rock

Selah: Stop, Look, Listen- January 5, 2023

The Lord be with you.

These early days of January, I always think of as a good time for looking back and good for looking ahead. As we are in the month that the Romans named Januarius, they named it after the Roman God Janus. That was the God of doors, of gates, of endings, and beginnings. And the god Janus was always represented as having two faces. That is one face for looking backward and one for looking forward. And I'm gonna take a little time with you today to look back over the past year and to look ahead. And in order to do that, well, I wanna tell you about my mom and to talk about something very important that I learned from my mother. As anyone who ever knew my mother, I think one of the first things that would ever stand out about Bernice Smith is that she had a green thumb. I really do think that the grass grew up greener on our side of the fence because, well, my mother had a way of making the desert bloom to bloom with roses, daisies, poppies, and more. My mom had a way of coaxing beauty out of the stubborn Kalechi soil of this desert Southwest. And I remember many Sunday mornings 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 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 this wonderful compost pit that was out behind our house. And they didn't know that into that compost pit, my mom would put cuttings from the garden, grass clippings, piles of dead leaves, kitchen scraps, and she would take all that stinky stuff that today we would call biodegradable waste. And my mom would, you know, she'd go out looking for that, hunting for that, all that garbage to put into her compost pit. And then my mother would put some dirt over it and she would sprinkle water over it and my mother would wait and 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. And today, as you and I are in this new year, thinking back and thinking ahead, I'm looking at a Bible text that every time I read it, I just think about my mom's compost pit because it's a verse that tells us that God has a compost, a compost pit of redemption.

I'm looking at Romans chapter eight, verse 28, where God 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 that we know that God works all things. Not some things, not most things, but we know that



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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 they aren't. Because there are things that have happened to you and me in this past year that, well, they weren't good. Some things that had a lot of sin, there was injustice, pain, grief. Rather what the apostle Paul is saying here 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. He knows how to take the trash of our lives, our failures, our regrets, our heartaches, and God knows how to work them for good. I mean, that stuff that I just prefer that you not know about me, that stuff that you might wanna just keep from anyone else. God knows, God specializes in knowing how to take all of that to the foot of the cross and to work it for our eternal good. And what is that good?

Well, that good towards which God is working all things. The context here tells us that God is working all those things for the good that we might be conformed to the image of Christ. God knows how to work all those things, the good and the bad, to make us more like Jesus. To answer our prayers that we become more like Jesus. Now you and I can probably take good stuff that happens in our lives and we can take that good and we can make something good out of it, but notice that God knows how to take even the bad stuff and to work it for his loving purpose for you and me of making us more like Jesus. That's why St. Augustine said of this verse, Romans 8:28, he said that God works even our sins together for his purpose. And that's why we call God savior.

Some time ago I was in church on a Sunday morning. It was time for the offering and as the offering plate was being passed, it was like the spirit of God nudge me and whispered to me and said, 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, I want you to dare to give to me today your failures, your heartbreaks, your regrets, give all that ugly stuff to me and watch me go to work to bless and to bless you and others.

My mom had her compost pit where she took the trash, the scraps, I mean all that stuff that everybody else would throw away. My mom took that and she would work it for good. And I'm here to tell you today that as we stand in this new year that God will take all that stuff into his compost pit of redemption where God can take all of that really ugly stuff in our lives, the garbage, and God knows how to work it. He knows how to work it for our eternal good and for his glory. And that's why we call it the gospel, the good news.

I am Tim Smith, a fellow traveler. Thank you for listening. Until next time. Until next time.