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Music: <introductory music>

Rebecca: Hello and welcome to Mind the Gap, a commentary podcast about all those verses that get left out of the readings in the Revised Common Lectionary. I am one of your hosts, Becca. My pronouns are she/her. I'm a Lutheran pastor in Michigan, and I've been serving in parish ministry for five years.

Annemarie: And I'm your other host, Annemarie. My pronouns are she/her. I'm a Lutheran pastor in New Jersey, and I've been serving in parish ministry in the ELCA for 15 years.

Rebecca: You know how the lectionary pericopes occasionally skip over a handful of verses in the middle of a passage? We are putting those pieces back into the readings so that we can hear them in their entirety and give ourselves a chance to explore what they mean altogether...

Annemarie: ...how the exclusion of those verses does or doesn't change things, and what (if any) wisdom we can gain for our preaching by minding that gap.

Music: <introductory music>

Rebecca: Thank you to everyone who has supported us on Ko-fi and Patreon. That's Lee and Kim, David, Jennifer, Jerry, Melissa, and Liz. We so appreciate everything that you make possible. Annemarie, what's on your mind this week?

Annemarie: We are right in the heart of October, and I love October. There's lots of reasons why I love October. One is that my birthday is in October, so I feel like it's a good month, but I also just love this time of year. I love a time of year where things are kind of shifting from one thing to the next. I just kind of love being in liminal time and I am just having some joy over cooler weather, layering with flannel and sweatshirts and hoodies and warm drinks. I'm finding myself craving tea later in the day just because I want a warm beverage in my hand, and it also brings about lots of fun at church, and it's busy. Gosh, it's busy, but I am just kind of loving fall right now, just really giving thanks for the ways in which those remind us of life and death and resurrection and all the rest. Rebecca, what could possibly be on your mind today?

Rebecca: About the only thing on my mind at the moment is the fact that I am moving, still working on that. It's at the point where it's overwhelming and all consuming, but also it brings out a savage ness in my ability to just toss things and cut any affection I may have had for it. It's like, no, I don't actually care about this enough to find a box that this can fit in. So that's where I'm at with that. My goal for today is to finish putting things in boxes. I still have cleaning, I still have car packing and a lot of other things, but I am crossing my fingers that that's where I'll get to today. So I just got to stay focused and power through. Thank you for your support as I go through this, including your Starbucks gifts and my own appreciation of fall and everything, pumpkin spice season in that. So yeah, that's where I'm at with things.

Annemarie: People should know that sometimes I'm more of a pain than I am a help, but I am so excited for you to move. I know how hard it is. I just did it and Savage Rebecca is probably one of my top five Rebecca's of all the kinds of people we inhabit, right?

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Savage Rebecca just sounds like super fun. So as long as you don't throw away any books about the Psalms, we'll be fine.

Rebecca: Certainly not, but all of my books are packed, so that does make this project trickier.

Annemarie: That's a big deal.

Rebecca: It is. But I'm hopeful that we're still going to have a solid discussion this week, and I think it's about time that we head on into the texts.

Annemarie: Sounds good.

Music: <piano music>

Rebecca: The psalm for the semicontinuous series of readings for the twentieth Sunday after Pentecost in Year A is Psalm 106:1-6, 19-23...

Annemarie: ...meaning the gap we are exploring is Psalm 106:7-18. I will be reading the assigned verses...

Rebecca: ...and I will be reading the verses that are left out of the lectionary.

Annemarie: ¹ Praise the Lord!
O give thanks to the Lord, for he is good;
for his steadfast love endures for ever.
² Who can utter the mighty doings of the Lord,
or declare all his praise?
³ Happy are those who observe justice,
who do righteousness at all times.
⁴ Remember me, O Lord, when you show favor to your people;
help me when you deliver them;
⁵ that I may see the prosperity of your chosen ones,
that I may rejoice in the gladness of your nation,
that I may glory in your heritage.
⁶ Both we and our ancestors have sinned;
we have committed iniquity, have done wickedly.

Rebecca: ⁷ Our ancestors, when they were in Egypt,
did not consider your wonderful works;
they did not remember the abundance of your steadfast love,
but rebelled against the Most High at the Red Sea.
⁸ Yet he saved them for his name's sake,
so that he might make known his mighty power.
⁹ He rebuked the Red Sea, and it became dry;
he led them through the deep as through a desert.
¹⁰ So he saved them from the hand of the foe,
and delivered them from the hand of the enemy.
¹¹ The waters covered their adversaries;
not one of them was left.

¹² Then they believed his words;
they sang his praise.

¹³ But they soon forgot his works;
they did not wait for his counsel.

¹⁴ But they had a wanton craving in the wilderness,
and put God to the test in the desert;

¹⁵ he gave them what they asked,
but sent a wasting disease among them.

¹⁶ They were jealous of Moses in the camp,
and of Aaron, the holy one of the Lord.

¹⁷ The earth opened and swallowed up Dathan,
and covered the faction of Abiram.

¹⁸ Fire also broke out in their company;
the flame burned up the wicked.

Annemarie: ¹⁹ They made a calf at Horeb
and worshipped a cast image.
²⁰ They exchanged the glory of God
for the image of an ox that eats grass.
²¹ They forgot God, their Savior,
who had done great things in Egypt,
²² wondrous works in the land of Ham,
and awesome deeds by the Red Sea.
²³ Therefore he said he would destroy them—
had not Moses, his chosen one,
stood in the breach before him,
to turn away his wrath from destroying them.

Music: <piano music>

Annemarie: What's interesting about some of the things I learned about Psalm 106, because of course the first place I went was the New Jerome Commentary.

Rebecca: I'm shocked.

Annemarie: I know. Everyone makes their shock face. So the New Jerome commentary says that Psalm 106 is a historical recital. So it's really just kind of giving us a historical breakdown and kind of rehashing of what has happened. But that is similar to Psalms 78 and 105, which in the semicontinuous series has been something we've been hearing a lot from, and I think is fascinating to know that all of those psalms are in the same category or have the same kind of vibe to them, which is that they are recounting what has already happened in order to remind the reader the one who was praying. Maybe even in this one, there's a kind of cadence to this hymn. There's a lot of repetitive phrasing, which often makes scholars believe that this could have been sung at some point. And so right out of the gate, I was really fascinated by the fact that this was similar to 78 and 105, and that we've heard these in the semicontinuous series, and that this really makes a turn to a lament. It takes that historical kind of reference and recounting and turns it

also into something that needs to be felt and heard in a way that makes people's hearts feel differently.

Rebecca: I definitely also noticed the thematic connection, the fact that we're, again, recounting the Exodus, we're recounting the time in the wilderness, we're recounting the liberation from captivity in Egypt. This one had more references that I had to look up and remind myself what specific people or events were being referred to. So I did go through the trouble of looking up Dathan and Abiram. I don't know if other people know that story better, but I—

Annemarie: What's it all about? Tell us.

Rebecca: Well, so it's referring to chapter 16 of the book of Numbers, and it's a piece of the Exodus story where there is a revolt coming against Moses and Aaron. And Dathan and Abiram are only mentioned by name in that passage, but there's actually a rabbinic tradition of connecting them with all of the other moments when Israelites have resisted Moses and Aaron: the voices that said, "We're better off in Egypt," the voices that said, "Did you just bring us here to die?" Even some medieval writers would connect them to the two Hebrews that were fighting that incited Moses's original flight from Egypt out to the tribes with the Midianites. And I thought that was interesting. It's just a historical tradition of giving a little bit more background to these names that have a very severe fate of the ground opening up and swallowing them and their involvement in this pushback on the leadership of Moses and Aaron and the way that tradition kind of looked at that was saying, okay, it's not actually they just popped up out of the blue and it's this one thing that led to this really severe reaction or correction.

We're actually kind of treating these personifications of all of the background noise, the resistance, the struggle to go along with God's plan of freedom here. These are the names given to the voices of doubt, of fear and everything else that has really made it difficult for the Hebrews to trust that God is leading them towards liberation and abundance. And I thought that that was interesting. It was a way of recognizing the severity of what befalls them in a rather brief story and gives them this larger role in terms of a connection to this overall story.

Annemarie: Yeah, that's really, I think, fascinating, especially given that if you read the rest of Psalm 106, which goes fairly long, the recounting of this history gets really dark. It really doesn't skim across anything that is hard for folks to be reminded of. And I think that that helps kind of see the wholeness of that story and not just the pieces we pick out to hear, but the ways in which that is the whole of the Hebrew people's story, that you can't forget this piece of it for the sake of whatever has happened since then, and that there is something happening here that's different with Moses and with the folks that the ones that he led out of Egypt, and now the reminder of this history is this place where God's people get to remember and hopefully make different choices in the future, hopefully learn from the past and learn from sometimes their own missteps that have led to their own demise and sometimes God's retribution for the sake of correction and trying to lead to righteousness. I think that's really, really cool, and I was really glad that you looked up who those folks were because I did not have a chance. So between the two of us, we get it all.

Rebecca: I always want to admit when I don't catch an allusion or a reference to another piece of scripture. Pastors are not encyclopedias, and it's okay for us to say, "I had to look that up too." I don't know.

One of the bibles I read the psalm in didn't label it a history psalm per se. It labeled it as a confession and spoke about it as being part of a genre of psalms of confession. And I thought that that had links to what we have talked about with some of those other Psalms you mentioned of recounting errors of our past and that being as important as honoring our ancestors is noticing and acknowledging where they have fallen short. And it also just framed it interestingly for me in terms of reminding me of the liturgical role of confession, or not even reminding me, just making me think about the liturgical role of confession, its importance and how it goes hand in hand with remembering God's steadfast love and considering God's wonderful works. That was kind of the question that it prompted for me first and foremost, especially reading the gap itself, maybe even in isolation, the first verses of the gap, talk about our ancestors did not consider your wonderful works, did not remember the abundance of your steadfast love.

And I think it's so important to always have that be the foundation of our confession. We don't tell the stories of where we have fallen short. We don't admit these shortcomings. We don't go through confession for the sake of beating ourselves up or being stuck in those moments of failure. We do that because we can trust in God's steadfast love because we want to remind ourselves that God saves through all of that anyway, that God leads us to freedom, that God loves God's creation, and the two have to go hand in hand. That's how they have significance, liturgically and theologically. And I thought that this was a beautiful way of seeing that and a good reminder to link those two strongly.

Annemarie: Where I was reading the place where I was looking at this psalm, it called it a communal lament, which I think is very similar to confession. I think that has the same kind of intention around it, which is to acknowledge shortcoming, to acknowledge that in our history we have not been perfect and this is our history. So I think some of this psalm too, I think links us, links the reader today to those who were writing the psalm and then to those whom the Psalm was referring to, right? Because this wasn't written when all those things were happening. This is a reference to what those things had been so that the reader, the writer, can remember those things and remember God's mercy even after these missteps and in some cases some pretty serious missteps, and that there's this lament of not following God's command. How did we get here? Where did we go wrong? And I think that there's this inhumanity, and especially for the people of God, no matter where we kind of end up in the way that we worship today, there's this sense of communal understanding of that is all of our history, that is all of our life that is all of our life of faith and those generations before us showing us a, that we have always had a hard time keeping up our end of a covenant, but also that God continually, even after God names the lament and names the disappointment, God continually comes back for us in mercy and compassion and that confession and forgiveness, we get that remembrance of death and resurrection in our baptism of remembering that we cannot hold up our end of this, that we are destined, we are doomed from the start.

And we have this entire salvation history to keep reminding us not only of our own failure, but also of God's continual action on our behalf. God's continual picking up the pieces or picking us up out of the pieces we create to say, alright, let's try this again. Let's keep going. And I think in a week where, so the Old Testament lesson for the

semicontinuous series is the making of the calf is the disobedience of the Hebrew people as Moses is going up Mount Sinai. And this is, I think the Psalm here is meant to amplify that and meant to give us the rest of the story to kind of march us along toward not March. I've been thinking about the Exodus marching us toward what the gospel is, and I think it's a really great connector between the Hebrew scriptures and the gospel and to say, yeah, this is what's been happening the whole time. This is what God has been having to deal with us forever, and in Jesus, God makes it right for us. God makes it right on our behalf.

Rebecca: Yeah. I think to bring it around to the gospel a little bit, it's one of those weeks where it's easy to fall into interpretations that towards supersessionism or other pieces. But if we're reading scripture with an eye towards how does this tell me how other people screwed up and me or my people got it right, finally, that's not going to help a lot. I don't think that—

Annemarie: It's not going to end you the way you think it will.

Rebecca: That's not going to help us have an encounter with scripture that actually lets us experience the spirit. And it can also be a gospel that feels like it has a lot of condemnation or fear, or that it leans towards threatening messages. But the Psalm, like you were saying, keeps those pieces tight to God's righteousness and God's love for us. So if we hear words that are difficult in the parable that Jesus tells in the gospel, always along with that, we have to hold the promise and the good news of God's love and salvation for us, which I mean without doing a whole episode just on the gospel parable, which there's plenty there to do for reminding ourselves to keep those two linked is a decent place to start.

Annemarie: I agree. The only other thing I would say about this is that the way that this Psalm is written really is about that balance. So there's constant, there's reminders of Yahweh's salvation throughout this psalm, but it is bookended that way. If you read the rest of the Psalm, you'll see more reminders of the salvation alongside the reminders of where the sinfulness has come in. And so I think that that's about long gospel. I think that's where you find the law alongside the good news, even here in the Hebrew scriptures, not even here, of course, it's here. Sorry.

Rebecca: Right. No, that's okay. And yeah, if verse seven implies that all of the places where the Israelites fall short came from not remembering God's wonderful works and not remembering the abundance of God's steadfast love, let's start there. That can't be a bad place to bring ourselves. If forgetting it leads us to trouble, then let's remember it and let's remember it emphatically, and let's name and praise what God has done for us.

Annemarie: Amen.

Music: <outro music>

Rebecca: Thank you so much for listening to our conversation this week. We hope that by minding the gap, you heard something that gave you a new insight, appreciation, or question about scripture.

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Annemarie: Now, your job is to find us @MindtheGapRCL on Instagram. Visit our website, mindthegaprcl.com, and if you really love us, support us using Ko-fi or Patreon. Share us with all your friends and colleagues.

Rebecca: Blessings on your preaching friends. And may the word of God dwell in you richly.

Music: <outro music>