

This transcript was exported on Oct 28, 2023.

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: Before we continue with the rest of the episode, we want to say thank you to everyone who has contributed to our Ko-Fi and Patreon accounts. That's Lee and Kim, Weta, David, Jennifer, Jerry, Melissa, and Liz. Thank you so much for all your support. Annemarie, I'm wondering what's on your mind this week.

Annemarie: Well, Rebecca, it's been a minute since we were recording, and first and foremost, I'm just glad to back in our host chairs talking about gaps in the lectionary and being our nerdy selves at the same time. And I was thinking about this in the car today as I was listening to the news and listening to the news is just so uplifting lately—

Rebecca: Mmm.

Annemarie: —My mind is on really all the people in the world right now who are suffering. There are almost too many places to name where people are suffering because of conflict happening in their own place. So if we're talking about Israel and Gaza, there is significant loss of life, significant complex realities for those folks living in that war. We have a conflict in Azerbaijan with Armenia. We have disasters in Afghanistan and Acapulco and then other places in the United States. We've had another mass shooting in Maine. And so my heart is breaking. My pastor heart is really trying to hold all of this together while still listening for the local things that my own, the people I serve are thinking about and worrying about. And I guess on my mind is just the hope we have in Jesus and that that can be enough that as people who are called to proclaim the gospel into places that are hurting and to bring God's word that rests in those places so well and so viscerally that might bring hope and that our prayers for peace, our prayers for the safety and the just lack of wars, I just want it all to end and for us to be good at responding when people, people are in need of one another.

So I know that's a huge amount of things that my mind that is on my mind today, but it's hard to ignore all of those things and I'm sure I left something out, which is I think

always going to be the case when we're trying to name all the places where we want God to be.

Rebecca: Yeah, there's so much heaviness on our minds and our hearts around you, all of that, something that I'm thinking about and feeling about pretty much every day I've taken to watching recordings for the healing of the nation's litany on YouTube just because as part of my prayer right now, to try to hold that in a way that doesn't make sense of it, but just a way of holding it without it drowning me. Something else I have had on my mind lately is just in light of my move and new call and also connected to some of the questions that are brought up in these major geopolitical issues is learning about the nation that was stewarding this land before Europeans arrived and everything. And so I'm just also thinking about and having the Onondaga nation on my mind and taking the time to learn about them and their nation and culture and history and how I can support that nation and everything else. It feels like a small yet local way of taking these things that are so big and out of my control, but letting the way I care about them influence something I can actually impact and learn about. So I've been learning about the Onondaga Nation and finding ways to support and contribute to them.

Annemarie: So you just did an acknowledgement of the land

Rebecca: That you

Annemarie: Are on. I am on land that originally belonged to the Lenape.

Rebecca: If anyone who's listening is curious about learning about what tribes or Native American nations are and or have been on the land where they live, there's a lot of resources for doing that online. So if you just Google Native American tribe or Native American nation for your town or zip code or state and so on, there's lots of different ways to learn about that. So we encourage that. We do have two psalms that we're going to talk about today. We have the psalm for All Saints Day, which is pretty most often. We have seen move to the next Sunday. So we're going to do a psalm for All Saints Day and then the psalm for the Semicon continuous series for the 23rd Sunday after Pentecost, based on whether you are just choosing to use those scriptures instead, but still doing All Saints Sunday or whatever your local liturgy may end up including, we wanted to be able to go over both of those for everyone. I

Music: <piano music>

Rebecca: The psalm for All Saints Day in Year A is Psalm 34:1-10, 22...

Annemarie: ...meaning the gap we are exploring is Psalm 34:11-21. I will be reading the assigned verses...

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

Annemarie: ¹ I will bless the Lord at all times;
his praise shall continually be in my mouth.
² My soul makes its boast in the Lord;
let the humble hear and be glad.
³ O magnify the Lord with me,

and let us exalt his name together.

⁴ I sought the Lord, and he answered me,
and delivered me from all my fears.

⁵ Look to him, and be radiant;
so your faces shall never be ashamed.

⁶ This poor soul cried, and was heard by the Lord,
and was saved from every trouble.

⁷ The angel of the Lord encamps
around those who fear him, and delivers them.

⁸ O taste and see that the Lord is good;
happy are those who take refuge in him.

⁹ O fear the Lord, you his holy ones,
for those who fear him have no want.

¹⁰ The young lions suffer want and hunger,
but those who seek the Lord lack no good thing.

Rebecca: ¹¹ Come, O children, listen to me;
I will teach you the fear of the Lord.

¹² Which of you desires life,
and covets many days to enjoy good?

¹³ Keep your tongue from evil,
and your lips from speaking deceit.

¹⁴ Depart from evil, and do good;
seek peace, and pursue it.

¹⁵ The eyes of the Lord are on the righteous,
and his ears are open to their cry.

¹⁶ The face of the Lord is against evildoers,
to cut off the remembrance of them from the earth.

¹⁷ When the righteous cry for help, the Lord hears,
and rescues them from all their troubles.

¹⁸ The Lord is near to the broken-hearted,
and saves the crushed in spirit.

¹⁹ Many are the afflictions of the righteous,
but the Lord rescues them from them all.

²⁰ He keeps all their bones;
not one of them will be broken.

²¹ Evil brings death to the wicked,
and those who hate the righteous will be condemned.

Annemarie: ²² The Lord redeems the life of his servants;
none of those who take refuge in him will be condemned.

Music: <piano music>

Annemarie: I really like this psalm for All Saints.

This transcript was exported on Oct 28, 2023.

Rebecca: What do you like about it?

Annemarie: Well, I like the constant—I mean, it's long, right? I mean, especially if you add in the gap.

But I also think that there's this balance of hearing the fears, hearing what needs to be rescued, and then being there and delivering God's people and giving refuge and making sure that they don't have fear or they don't, well, they have fear, but they have that fear the way that we fear in the healthy way, like the trust. And we know that God is with us. We know that there is promise there. Those who seek the Lord lack no good thing. And I think on All Saints, because it's a white day and liturgical colors, when we do those things, I always think of All Saints as the Easter in the fall. And so there's this chance for us to really live into resurrection and the promises of God to be with us even in death, that the death doesn't have a say and that experience of death, not only about Jesus' death and resurrection, but on All Saints, we have to name the fact that we've experienced loss and that in the midst of that loss, God is present. And we know God is present because of Easter, because of the death and resurrection of Jesus. And so I don't know, I just feel like this Psalm is a great addition to all of that.

Rebecca: I thought that verse 18 from the gap was so apt for All Saints, and that was one that really stood out to me. "The Lord is near to the broken hearted and saves the crushed in spirit." I think All Saints becomes this day that allows for an experience of grief for a lot of people, maybe for the first time in a while, if a loss was sometime in the past, maybe in a new way, maybe the only time when they hear something in worship that really speaks to that piece of their experience. And I think verse 18 has such comfort and promise in it. I spent some time looking into that verse in particular after it stood out to me. And I caught on this idea of being broken hearted and looked at the Hebrew for heart.

And we all know I'm not first and foremost a Hebrew scholar, I'm more comfortable with the Greek, but looking at how the Hebrew word *leb* or *lebab* is almost an onomatopoeia of a heartbeat. I found sources that were talking about, I don't know if that's the actual etymology, but even Jewish sources that referred to it as a meaningful connection to that word. And stop me if I've referenced this book before because I actually really love this resource—it's something I read in an advanced worship class with Dr. Ben Stewart at LSTC. It's called *From the Beginning to Baptism* by Linda Gibler, who's Roman Catholic. And it goes through the scientific and sacred histories of the elements of worship that are physically communicating promise to us: water, oil, and fire. And in the book, she reminds us that our bodies are mostly water. And she talks about even our own bodily functions reminding us of baptism because of that, our tears and our heartbeats being water flowing out of us and water moving through us. And on this holy day that includes grief for so many people, I just think that that could be a really powerful thing for people to hear and a link to their loved ones in the communion of saints. And so I see a big opportunity in that and in this gap for preaching a real word of promise and comfort to folks on All Saints.

Annemarie: Yeah. Well, and I know you talked about verse 18, but if you go to 19 and 20, it's almost continuing that whole sense of many are the afflictions of the righteous. That's just real, right? The afflictions of the righteous is day-to-day life. It's not always easy. And the Lord rescues them from all the Lord is there for us in the midst of all of the things that afflict us, whether it's arthritis in our hands or it's the people at work or it's traffic. It's the

promise of resurrection, the promise of God's holy love. And grace means that whatever comes next has nothing to do with what we have right now is this.

The Lord rescues them from them all. There's this sense of wholeness and a different kind of life that we get to celebrate on for for the whole community of those around us and for us in that time. So we're getting to that point in the church year where we start talking too about the end time and what is next. And there's always this conversation in my mind of: are we in the next, right? Are we in this time where that has been, the kingdom is here, the kingdom of God has come here. That's what John told us.

Rebecca: The last thing that felt relevant to mention about this psalm is that in Hebrew, it's an acrostic poem, meaning each verse starts with a letter of the Hebrew alphabet and it goes through. And part of what that does is capture the sense of entirety within that. But I also just wanted to kind of throw out there for folks that I've also, because I did it just this last week, but I've used acrostics in confirmation classes or in other just kind of group faith formation settings. They've worked well for me as a group activity. So the most recent example I did was we were talking about the Holy Spirit and the fruits of the Holy Spirit. So we have the promised fruits of the Holy Spirit from Galatians, but we wanted to also think about other ways we can live out those kinds of values in our lives as disciples. And so I wrote "Holy Spirit" down a piece of paper and had the group together just kind of write an acrostic poem where each letter started another fruit that we could think of. So one student said, for the O in holy, they said, "Open." And what does it mean to live openly? And then for R, righteous, righteousness. But I just wanted to throw that out there as a possibility for folks because it was part of this psalm.

Annemarie: I love when we see literary tools or literary context within scripture, and I think it reminds us that there are people behind how these are written and that the writing of these is both is spirit led and human made.

Rebecca: Mmm.

Annemarie: So there's that kind of concert happening in those two things.

Rebecca: And that we're always working in translation, for you and me in our context.

Annemarie: You're right though. But it also inspires more questions the more we talk about where these texts come from and how they're created. And I think how we might not be adding to the book in the way that when scripture was kind of being pulled together in the books that we have, we aren't adding onto those core 66 books. However, it doesn't mean that prophetic writing isn't still happening,

And it doesn't mean that those prophetic writings aren't still influencing us even today. And so we have these other resources and people, God is still speaking in people, and we are hearing that in context and in our own ways and our own language that is still influencing and still reminding us of what God has been saying all along. And so when we have those reminders and we have those modern day prophets, we have those modern day mouthpieces for the holy divine. It really helps us to see in Psalms like this, we have Psalms that are relating to people, real people at a real time that are also relating to us, that are just echoing more and more of those messages about God from God, how it is we can live in the world and what God's people have been doing all along.

This transcript was exported on Oct 28, 2023.

Rebecca: Scripture is alive. That's one of my Transfiguration Sunday sermons. That's all I'll say for now. Maybe we'll get to it. I have no idea if there's a gap on Transfiguration. We do still have another gap to get to, so how about we jump into the next one?

Annemarie: I'm ready to jump.

Music: <piano music>

Annemarie: The psalm for the semicontinuous series of readings for the 23rd Sunday after Pentecost in Year A is Psalm 107:1-7, 33-37...

Rebecca: ...meaning the gap we are exploring is Psalm 107:8-32. I will be reading the assigned verses...

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

Rebecca: ¹ O give thanks to the Lord, for he is good;
for his steadfast love endures for ever.
² Let the redeemed of the Lord say so,
those he redeemed from trouble
³ and gathered in from the lands,
from the east and from the west,
from the north and from the south.

⁴ Some wandered in desert wastes,
finding no way to an inhabited town;
⁵ hungry and thirsty,
their soul fainted within them.
⁶ Then they cried to the Lord in their trouble,
and he delivered them from their distress;
⁷ he led them by a straight way,
until they reached an inhabited town.

Annemarie: ⁸ Let them thank the Lord for his steadfast love,
for his wonderful works to humankind.
⁹ For he satisfies the thirsty,
and the hungry he fills with good things.
¹⁰ Some sat in darkness and in gloom,
prisoners in misery and in irons,
¹¹ for they had rebelled against the words of God,
and spurned the counsel of the Most High.
¹² Their hearts were bowed down with hard labor;
they fell down, with no one to help.
¹³ Then they cried to the Lord in their trouble,
and he saved them from their distress;
¹⁴ he brought them out of darkness and gloom,
and broke their bonds asunder.
¹⁵ Let them thank the Lord for his steadfast love,
for his wonderful works to humankind.

¹⁶ For he shatters the doors of bronze,
and cuts in two the bars of iron.

¹⁷ Some were sick through their sinful ways,
and because of their iniquities endured affliction;
¹⁸ they loathed any kind of food,
and they drew near to the gates of death.
¹⁹ Then they cried to the Lord in their trouble,
and he saved them from their distress;
²⁰ he sent out his word and healed them,
and delivered them from destruction.
²¹ Let them thank the Lord for his steadfast love,
for his wonderful works to humankind.
²² And let them offer thanksgiving sacrifices,
and tell of his deeds with songs of joy.

²³ Some went down to the sea in ships,
doing business on the mighty waters;
²⁴ they saw the deeds of the Lord,
his wondrous works in the deep.
²⁵ For he commanded and raised the stormy wind,
which lifted up the waves of the sea.
²⁶ They mounted up to heaven, they went down to the depths;
their courage melted away in their calamity;
²⁷ they reeled and staggered like drunkards,
and were at their wits' end.
²⁸ Then they cried to the Lord in their trouble,
and he brought them out from their distress;
²⁹ he made the storm be still,
and the waves of the sea were hushed.
³⁰ Then they were glad because they had quiet,
and he brought them to their desired haven.
³¹ Let them thank the Lord for his steadfast love,
for his wonderful works to humankind.
³² Let them extol him in the congregation of the people,
and praise him in the assembly of the elders.

Rebecca: ³³ He turns rivers into a desert,
springs of water into thirsty ground,
³⁴ a fruitful land into a salty waste,
because of the wickedness of its inhabitants.
³⁵ He turns a desert into pools of water,
a parched land into springs of water.
³⁶ And there he lets the hungry live,
and they establish a town to live in;
³⁷ they sow fields, and plant vineyards,
and get a fruitful yield.

Music: <piano music>

Annemarie: There's a lot happening in this song.

Rebecca: There is a lot. It's a longer one. It's a long piece in its entirety. It's a fairly long gap, and it kind of sounded—we've talked about music and songs in relation to the Psalms before, but its narrative quality and the scenes kind of felt especially like folk songs or country songs or something to me this time. One of the commentaries on Working Preacher helped me break down and follow that we've got four main scenes. We've got this idea of being lost in a desert, this idea of being prisoners, this idea of being ill and being in a storm at sea that are different scenes where God brings deliverance to the characters in the Psalm. And what I found myself thinking about in looking at that was just the variety of situations and how you might get there. There's things that maybe we ended up in because of our actions, things we couldn't control at all, things that are external conflicts, things that are internal conflicts. So I thought maybe there was something there in terms of speaking to the breadth of God's salvation and then maybe inviting people to name a time for themselves when they experienced something similar in terms of desperation or hardship and how God responded and how they experienced God within that.

Annemarie: Yeah, in the semicontinuous series this is paired with a reading from Joshua, and so oftentimes they're paired together on purpose. The reading from Joshua is Joshua 3:7-17. And so in the semicontinuous, you're moving through the book of Joshua and the dichotomy of blessing and punishing. Blessing, the good, and punishing, the evil, is very present in this particular section. And we learn, it actually tells us more about the theology of what was happening at the time. And I think this is one of those echoes, right? There's a lot of this, especially toward the end, the sea and the whole calamity on the sea reminded me a little bit of Jonah or the disciples with Jesus on the water. But then after that, you have the fruitful land into a salty waste because of the wickedness of his inhabitants. You still have this back and forth between blessing and cursing and really more of a theological kind of exposition than a historical one.

But still this understanding of how it is that God responds to what we're doing and how we reap, and we've talked about this before, the natural consequences of our own behaviors are really important to remember here. And I think we see that a lot. And we sometimes interpret it in Hebrew scriptures as God's punishment. And in Hebrew scriptures, it's interpreted as God's punishment. And I don't think that that's not that. I think it's also for us to remember that we have free will and we're able to choose what it is that we are doing not only for ourselves, but for each other. And the Psalm is really reminding us of the places where God has acted and the places where sometimes it's really just things that are happening to us or the results of our own decision making that are causing this. Because the, again, if you go back to the Joshua, there's mention of Solomon's temple and the Ark. There's some decisions that the people are making that they think are what God would want, and we'll learn soon if that is indeed what God had wanted. But there is this ebb and flow going on in this Psalm that I think really helps bring that out and the gap, I think it just has great language to it.

And I think has great movement to it. I loved reading it. It was really kind of fun to read.

This transcript was exported on Oct 28, 2023.

Rebecca: I loved listening to it. It felt so rhythmic when you were reading, actually, I was honestly sitting here and sinking into it.

Annemarie: Well, and the refrain, right? The refrain is really important here. Let them thank the Lord for his steadfast love, for his wonderful works to humankind. Psalms often have that one phrase that gets repeated when we sing our Psalms together or we have a planned refrain, but that in this almost acts, even if you're just reading it without music, it really does act as that connecting tissue between all of the pieces of this.

Rebecca: I think this Psalm does actually get used elsewhere or other times in the lectionary. I'm pretty sure the commentary I read was actually from a week of the disciples on the water and Jesus calming the storm. So I think different pieces of it do get used for that. I liked in the, I'll call it the verse about being a prisoner and everything. I liked this imagery of it is in its own way talking about being a literal prisoner. And I actually think it's really important for us to remember when scripture is talking about literal prisoners, because they're such—incarcerated people are such an overlooked part of our society. But I did also really like this idea of being a prisoner in misery or the sitting in darkness and gloom. This concept that these elements do also imprison us, and there can be a lot of value also in finding what we are imprisoned by. Those of us who ostensibly have more freedom and think we have more ability to choose and do what we want. Looking deeper at that, how we may be bound by things we don't even notice because there's such a fact of life. I thought that that was a verse that I heard saying something to me about considering what imprisons me, what imprisons us, and what impact does that have on how I live and connect to other people and my relationship to God.

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.

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>