

GATHERED

calling the people of God together
Deuteronomy 30:1-5



memorize
this:

Then the Lord your God will restore your fortunes and have mercy on you, and he will gather you again from all the peoples where the Lord your God has scattered you (Deuteronomy 5:3 ESV)

Our passage uses two words to describe God's involvement in the movement of His people: scattered and gathered. Interestingly Jesus uses the same words in the teaching of some of His parables, especially that of the sower.

points to ponder

1) *Has the quarantine caused you to feel as if you were in exile? How do/did you feel about returning to worship in the building?*

2) *Has living in exile caused you to question or doubt your faith?*

words to wrangle

The purposes of sheltering and comfort build a solid foundation for the biblical concept of being gathered. Read Psalm 27.

1) *In what time of life do we most need God's shelter and comfort?*

2) *Does the recent pandemic fit this need? How has it disrupted the ministry of your church?*

conclusions to consider

A primary truth in this lesson is at work in the moments of history to gather His people. How has God been at work in your life, group and church during this pandemic? In what ways have you personally felt "gathered" by God?

In some ways, the words also describe how God uses history as an object lesson for His people. The context of Deuteronomy 30 falls into this category. We find the children of Israel in the midst of one of the most important object lessons of all time.

Let's look for a moment at God's part in the gathering process by considering two passages of Scripture, Psalm 102:18-22 and Psalm 50:3-5.

The 102nd Psalm is introduced as "a prayer of one who is afflicted" and begins with the words, "Hear my prayer, O Lord; let my cry come to you! Do not hide your face from me in the day of my distress! (Psalm 102:1-2a ESV). Does that feel as if the psalm could have been written by you?

The psalmist Asaph adds to our understanding of the God who gathers His people. "Our God comes" (Psalm 50:3 ESV). In times of exile, in times of trouble, the first question on the minds of believers and skeptics, "Where is our God?" Asaph insists God does not keep silence. He is present in the same way as a devouring fire or a mighty tempest. Would you agree God has been present in this exile?

There are two promises that God offers in response to the return of His people. First God will restore them in a community – they will again feel as if they are the people of God. Can you relate to the need to feel like God's people again?

The second promise that God offers in response to the return of His people is mercy. While the Law may be satisfied, our heart still feels lonely. God is faithful. No matter the feeling, He will neither leave nor forsake you.

Our history, like it or not, includes the exile of this time of quarantine. Embrace the lessons God has planted on your heart - the importance of friends, the absence of freedoms, the yearning to be gathered and filled. Make being gathered to God and His people a part of your new normal.