

Kum ba yah my Lord, Kum ba yah. Kum ba yah, my Lord. Kum ba yah. Kum ba yah, my Lord. Kum ba ya. Oh Lord, Kum ba ya. Someone's laughing Lord. Kum ba ya. Someone's laughing Lord. Kum ba ya. Someone's laughing Lord. Kum ba ya. Oh Lord Kum ba ya.

One of the most difficult things about being Christian, indeed about being human, is that we live in in-between times. Many billions of years ago there was a beginning to time and creation. Sometime in the future we have been promised that God will put everything right and all of creation will be whole again, the new creation we heard described in our reading from the book of Revelation this morning. But in between that beginning and the time when all things will be made new, there are many different kinds of moments--some wonderful, some terrible, and many more in between.

Someone's crying Lord. Kum ba ya. Someone's crying Lord. Kum ba ya. Someone's crying Lord. Kum ba ya. Oh Lord Kum ba ya.

We know that there are many beautiful and good things about our world. But we also know that there are many things about this world that are not right, that are broken. We hurt each other. Children go hungry. People lose their jobs. People we love get sick. People we love die. We get sick. We die. As Christians we remind ourselves again and again that God will make all things new. But sometimes, we despair. Sometimes we lose hope. Sometimes we find ourselves shaking our fist at God, and asking, "Why God, why does it have to be this way?"

Someone's hurting Lord, Kum ba ya. Someone's hurting Lord. Kum ba ya. Someone's hurting Lord, Kum ba ya. Oh Lord, Kum ba ya.

It can be very difficult to accept life in these in-between-times. "God, I'm a good person. I go to church. I take care of my family. I am a faithful Christian. I work hard. Why didn't you protect me? Why didn't you protect my loved ones?" We might find ourselves crying. I am not going to pretend this morning that I understand the answers to these questions. I don't understand why we live in in-between times. I don't know why suffering exists. I don't know why children are hungry, or we hurt each other, or people lose their jobs, or we get sick and why we die. I don't know why any of these things happen. There are some things that are just beyond human comprehension. Even those closest to Jesus had trouble living in these in-between-times. Look at our story from the Gospel of John for this morning.

Jesus' close friend Lazarus had been very ill. And Lazarus' two sisters, Mary and Martha, sent word to Jesus, asking him to come to Lazarus that he might heal him. But

Proper 26

Jesus doesn't respond immediately to their pleas. By the time Jesus arrives at the home of Lazarus and his sisters, Lazarus has already been dead 4 days. Mary and Martha and others who were there responded to Jesus' delay in coming to Lazarus' aid in the way almost all of us respond when we lose someone or something near and dear to us. "Lord, if you had been here, my brother would not have died." and "Could not he who opened the eyes of the blind man have kept this man from dying?" or as we might put it, "God why did you let this happen? Why didn't you do something? Why did you let him die?"

Someone's angry Lord. Kum ba ya. Someone's angry Lord. Kum ba ya. Someone's angry Lord. Kum ba ya. Oh Lord Kum ba ya.

And what does Jesus do? He doesn't reprimand them for questioning him. He doesn't rebuke Mary, Martha and the others for their anger. He doesn't justify his delay. He doesn't even explain it. What Jesus does do in the face of the pain of those he loves is he weeps. This story gives us no answer as to why God there is pain and suffering in this in-between time, why we will all die. But this story does tell us that God is with us in our times of suffering and pain. God is with us in this in-between time. And this story also tells us that God acts. Maybe God doesn't act in the way we want or think God should act. Jesus doesn't come running when Mary and Martha call. But Jesus does come, and Jesus does raise Lazarus from the dead. God also acts in the midst of our suffering. God doesn't remove our suffering, But God is beside us weeping with us and acting in the midst of our suffering. The ways in which God takes action in our lives, is not always in the ways we think or want God to act, but God is always there with us redeeming our suffering, bringing life out of loss, life out of death. This is the heart of the Christian faith--the understanding that in the midst of this fallen and broken world, a world full of pain and suffering, Jesus is with us, God is with us, and God acts, God redeems. Now, redemption does not mean a return to the way things were before our loss. Redemption does not mean that our losses magically go away, and what we lost is returned to us. What redemption means, is that in the midst of our pain, suffering, and loss, if we look to God, God will show us where we can find new life. Not a life without pain, not our old life, not a life unchanged, but good, fulfilling and abundant life all the same.

Someone's living Lord. Kum ba ya. Someone's living Lord. Kum ba ya. Someone's living Lord. Kum ba ya. Oh Lord Kum ba ya.

The heart of the Christian faith is hope. And our task as Christians is to open ourselves up in this in-between time to God's redeeming work in our life, even in the midst of pain, suffering and loss, and to work with God to bring new life, new hope, redemption to others who need this hope, who need this new life. We, those who call ourselves followers of Christ, have work to do in this in-between time. We are called not just seek God's redemption in the midst of our own pain and suffering, but to help redeem the

Proper 26

pain and suffering of those around us--this is why we feed the hungry, cloth the poor, comfort those who mourn, visit those who are sick, fight for those who are experiencing injustice. We do these things because this is the work we've been given to do in the in-between time, and because it is through this God-given work that God brings redemption to others and to each and every one of us.

Someone's helping Lord. Kum ba ya. Someone's helping Lord. Kum ba ya. Someone's helping Lord. Kum ba ya. Oh Lord Kum ba ya.

We live in the in-between times. At any moment someone is crying, someone is laughing, someone is angry, someone is mourning, someone is shouting, and someone is rejoicing. At any moment someone is finding and someone is losing. At any moment someone is being born and someone is dying. No one knows for sure where the song "Kum ba ya" comes from, but most agree that the words are probably from an English/African dialect spoken by slaves in the United States, and that they are best translated, "Come by here." Slaves, who knew great suffering, great pain, and great sadness. Slaves who in the midst of what most of us would see as terrible lives, found the strength to sing, found the strength to say to God, "there are many moments in this in-between time--good moments, bad moments--come by here, be with us, be in our midst, come by here and bring us life out of death, bring us your redemption."

Don't give up at any moment. Keep going at any moment. Hang on at any moment. God is with you. God is beside you waiting for you to turn to Him for the new life, the redemption that He is offering to you. And when you discover yourself in the midst of a moment of redemption, a moment of new life. Don't keep it to yourself. Join in God's redemption and pass your new life on to someone else.

And if this in-between time is so painful for you that you don't even know how to reach out to God to grasp on to the new life being offered to you, perhaps you might follow the model of those slaves from Africa and simply sing,

Kum ba ya, my Lord, Kum ba ya. Kum ba ya my Lord. Kum ba ya. Kum ba ya my Lord. Kum ba ya. Oh Lord, Kum ba ya.