

As I read the 138th Psalm two stories came to my mind. The first was about a man who was watching a group of boys playing baseball. At a lull in the action he asked the third baseman what the score was. "21 to 0," was the reply. "Who's winning," the man then asked. "They are," replied the boy. "Aren't you discouraged?" said the man. "No," replied the boy, "we haven't batted yet!"

The second is my memory of one of our Maine church members. I met her when she was 91. She was living in a Skilled Nursing Facility having just lost one of her legs to diabetes. She was adjusting to her new prosthesis. She said that it was like a rocking chair, "You work hard but don't get very far." The nursery at the church was named in her honor - she had rocked most of the babies of the past 75 years born to congregation members. She had also memorized all of the Psalms (from the King James). She said she did it because if she ever lost her sight and was unable to read she wanted to be able to remember the Psalms which had brought her so much hope over her lifetime. (She could recall and recite any Psalm you asked, even the 119th). Over her bed she had an embroidered sign which read:

Please Be patient with me,  
God is NOT through with me yet!

The 138th Psalm is a Psalm of David (he did not write them all). As I thought about David I began to review his life with its ups and downs. He was the youngest in the family. When Samuel came to anoint one of Jesse's sons to replace Saul as King, David was left out in the fields with the sheep. His father did not think he was important enough to be brought in (I Samuel 16). After being anointed by Samuel, David had a troubled relationship with King Saul. At times he would be a comfort to Saul and at other times Saul sought to kill him. He spent months on the run with Saul seeking his life (I Samuel 18 and 19). Later after he had been established as King one of his own sons rose up in rebellion and tried to take the kingdom from him (2 Samuel 15). God did not make it easy for David and yet, he was considered a true follower of God (I Kings 9:)

This Psalm of David shows us some of David's relationship with God. First and foremost he acknowledges God's place in his life and his need for help and forgiveness. God has been with David his whole life and has heard the pleas and prayers of David (v.3). God is concerned about all people (v.6). Now, in a time of distress David reaches out again to God (v.7) "*Though I walk in the midst of trouble...*" And, he ends with an assurance that God will finish the work he has begun in him, "*The Lord will fulfill his purpose for me...*" David's final plea from the CEV is, "*Don't give up on us now!*"

Paul is writing to encourage the congregation at Ephesus. Paul is a prisoner. What do you do when your founder is in jail? It was a concern for the congregation. One can almost hear the conversations and the discussions. Look at what is happening to Paul because of Christ and his faith. Could it happen to us? How can we go on if this is going to happen to us? Paul's words are words of hope and encouragement. He wants to see what God has done. God has opened the doors for them to be a part of the Kingdom of heaven. God has extended grace, once thought only for Israel, to the whole world. The world is being changed and challenged through Paul and the other Apostles and believers. Christ came to demonstrate to the whole world the love of God.

He thus writes, *“This is why you should not be discouraged” (v.13)*. God has something good in store. He does not want their present situation to cloud their hope of the future. God is also the God of tomorrow, even if the outlook for tomorrow is stormy. It would be easy for Paul to be discouraged. Paul is in jail. The world is not changing the way they had hoped it would. Yet, even in jail Paul finds the strength to write words of encouragement to the congregations. Don’t grow discouraged, it is all for the good. Even if the score is 21 to 0 we still have to come up to bat!

When we look back at the history of Church we discover the times of the most intense growth often came during times of intense persecution and difficulty. During those times the church was forced to become creative. It is in these times that we become empowered - even in the dark. It is in these times that we discovered that *“God is not through with us yet.”* David prayed, *“Don’t give up on us yet.”* Paul wrote, *“Don’t be discouraged...”*

As we enter 2017 it is easy to be discouraged and want to give up. Yes, there are challenges before us - but this table is a reminder that what was a hope for Israel, the Passover, became a reality. As we take the bread and cup we are reminded of God’s love and concern for us. As we eat and drink in remembrance we do so with the faith that says, **“Be Patient - God is NOT through with us yet!”** -

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NIV, New International Bible Society, Zondervan, 1973, 1978, 1985  
NRSV, Division of Christian Education, NCC, 1988