

Rev. Dr. Laura Miller-Purrenhage
FCUCC
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Dancing With God

Will you please pray with me: Holy God, may the words of my mouth and the meditations of all of our hearts be faithful and pleasing unto you, for you are our rock and our salvation. Amen.

Since today's theme is dancing with God, I thought that it would be appropriate for my sermon to be a dance. Many you know that I grew up dancing in my dad's international folk dance club, and in praying over today's message, a dance that our group often did kept coming to my mind.

It is a dance from Israel called U'va'U Haovdim, which means "the lost ones will come." The words of the song refer to the moment when the Israelites, who had been made captives of the Assyrians and the Egyptians, were going to be able to return home and worship God in the temple in Jerusalem. You'll see in the dance the way that the dancers call to the exiles from all four directions and bring them back to worship. In Jewish history, it's a beautiful and critical moment.

Now, our own situation is not like theirs. I would guess that most of us have not been forced out of our homes, kidnapped and brought to a different country—though, for our siblings of color in particular, that situation may have been the history of their families. So we do need to be careful not to make simple comparisons between the violent treatment of the Jews and our own experiences.

Likewise, when we look at our Old Testament lesson, we are not quite like David. He was dancing in glory and joy before the arc of the covenant, believing that he was bringing God into the Jerusalem. But our faith—the faith that is renewed through the sacrament of Communion--teaches us that God is already here, in this sanctuary, or there in your homes, in your cabins, or hospitals,

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or rehab facilities, or prisons--everywhere. We are not bringing God in anywhere because God's promise is that God is already here.

But we tell these stories of Jewish history because they are stories of faithful witness of God's activity in the world. These stories can teach us something and pull up or reflect powerful emotions of yearning and joy. And seeing the story as told through dance and song can help us to understand Paul's message to the Ephesians a little better: Every single one of you—no matter who may have tried to exile you, no matter how distant you feel or how distant you are, no matter what you have lost—you all are God's people, always welcome at God's table of grace; God is always calling you home.

Will my dancers please come forward to your set places.