

Devotions for the Week of February 25, 2018
2nd Sunday of Lent
North East United Methodist Church
By Rev. Dr. Drew M. Christian

Sunday, February 25, 2018

Read Luke 13:31-35.

I have always been drawn to this passage because of the “longing” in Jesus’ voice. *“Jerusalem, Jerusalem, the city that kills the prophets and stones those who are sent to it! How often have I desired to gather your children together as a hen gathers her brood under her wings, and you were not willing.”* Can you hear the longing in Jesus’ voice? Can you hear Him crying out? *“Why, why do you not come to me?”*

Jesus’ words mirror God’s actions throughout history. Over and over again, God reached out to the people of Israel, and through them to the world. Over and over again, God would seek and search His people out, making covenant with them, calling on them to keep their side of the bargain and promising to be with them always. God would enter their lives in a mighty way, through the Word, through miracles, through the prophets, and when the people strayed away, when they forgot, God would reach out to them again and attempt to pull them back under His wings. Yet, as the Rev. James B. Lemler writes, *“In spite of God coming to God's people, in spite of the longing, the searching, in spite of God's continual offering of love and mercy, in spite of all of these things, people resist and even reject God and the promises brought by God.”*

Jesus stands before Jerusalem, the Holy city, the center of Israel and its faith, and cries out, “Why...Why do you not see the One who loves you so...Why do you continue to push Him

away...How can you not know how loved you are?"

Times have not changed...many people, even us at times, continue to push God and His love away. Often, when I am in crowds of people, like the North East Christmas Parade or walking along the boardwalk in Ocean City in July, I hear God's cry...as I look at the crowds, as I realize that many of them do not know Christ or have rejected His love. I hear God's cry from heaven as God looks down upon the community of North East, "*How often I have desired to gather your children together...and you were not willing.*" Furthermore, I think there are times when God looks at me and yearns for me to open my heart more to Him, to give my life fully to Him, to allow God to cover me with His wings.

Take time this week to pray for those you know, who like Jerusalem, are "*not willing*" to have God gather them under God's wings. Take time to pray for those who do not know Christ and to ask God how you might reach out to them, helping them come into the fold. Also, take time this Lent to ask God to help you surrender and embrace fully His amazing love.

Monday, February 26, 2018

Read Luke 13:31-35, I John 3:1-3, & I John 4:10.

God is constantly offering us a covenant relationship, is constantly reaching out to us even when we have gone astray.

In Genesis 9:8-13, it reads, Then God said to Noah and to his sons with him: "*I now establish my covenant with you and with your descendants after you and with every living creature that was with you - the birds, the livestock and all the wild animals, all those that came out of the ark with you - every living creature on earth. I establish my covenant with you: Never again will all life be cut off by the waters of a flood; never*

again will there be a flood to destroy the earth.” And God said, “This is the sign of the covenant I am making between men and you and every living creature with you, a covenant for all generations to come: I have set my rainbow in the clouds, and it will be the sign of the covenant between me and earth.”

God promises us life. God sets a rainbow in the sky to remind us of His love, His everlasting love and promise of life to each of us. And God continues to be about “wooing” us into relationship, offering us intimacy and closeness with Him.

In Genesis 12:1-3, God says to Abraham, *“Leave your country, your people and your father’s household and go to the land I will show you. I will make you a great nation and I will bless you; I will make your name great and you will be a blessing. I will bless those who bless you, and whoever curses you I will curse and all the peoples on earth will be blessed through you.”*

In Exodus 19:3-6, God says to Moses, *“This is what you are to say to the house of Jacob and what you are to tell the people of Israel: ‘You yourselves have seen what I did to Egypt, and how I carried you on eagles’ wings and brought you to myself. Now if you obey me fully and keep my covenant, then out of all nations you will be my treasured possession. Although the whole earth is mine, you will be for me a kingdom of priests and a holy nation.’”*

In 2 Samuel 23:5, David says, *“Is not my house right with God? Has he not made with me an everlasting covenant, arranged and secured in every part? Will he not bring to fruition my salvation and grant me my every desire?”*

Let us pull out a few words and phrases from these passages we have read...*“the sign of my covenant I am making between men” ...“a covenant for all generations to come” ...“I*

will bless you” ...”I will bless those who bless you, and whoever curses you I will curse” ...”I carried you on eagles’ wings” ...”brought you to myself” ...”you will be my treasured possession” ...”made with me an everlasting covenant.”

As the psalmist wrote, *“Surely goodness and love will follow me all of my days”* (Psalm 23:6). God pursues us throughout our lives, following us throughout our days, *“wooing”* us with His grace. Even after the world was so full of sin it had to be destroyed; even after Abraham laughed when told God would provide him a son; even after the Israelites grumbled and complained and asked the Lord to send them back to Egypt; even after David murdered and committed adultery...God still offers a covenant relationship. God still pulls Noah, Abraham, Moses, David toward Himself, and through them, God is still *“wooing”* us.

Then in Jeremiah 31:3, God goes even further and speaks to Jeremiah saying, *“I have loved you with an everlasting love; I have drawn you with loving-kindness.”* And in verse 33, *“This is the covenant I will make with the house of Israel after that time...I will put my law in their minds and write it on their hearts. I will be their God and they will be my people.”*

Now God would not only speak to all people through those He called, but God would speak to each person’s heart, so what Paul writes in Romans 1:19-20 would stand true. He writes, *“Since what may be known about God is plain to them, because God has made it plain to them...For God’s invisible qualities - his eternal power and divine nature - have been clearly seen, being understood from what has been made, so that men are without excuse.”*

In order to make God’s grace, God’s love, even more evident to us, God wrote His covenant with us on our hearts

through the Holy Spirit, so that we could more clearly feel his “*nudging*,” His grace “*wooing*” us toward Him.

Even after speaking to Noah, Abraham, Moses and David about His love for us, even after speaking directly to our hearts, even after all that - God did even more.

“For God so loved the world that he gave his one and only Son, that whoever believes in him shall not perish but have eternal life.”

God wants a relationship with us...You can see it throughout the Old Testament...You can see it in God sending His Son, Jesus...You can see it in Jesus’ Words, “*How often have I desired to gather your children...*”

And God continues to call to us, to reach out to us. Throughout our lives God is trying to nudge us closer to a time when we will wholeheartedly accept the love and relationship He is offering us...a love seen in the colors of the sunset, the cry of a newborn baby, the people that are placed in our lives to support, teach and love us...God is constantly, and has been constantly throughout history, nudging us toward this relationship. Accept it...Embrace it...Help others discover it...Take time tonight to give God thanks for it!

Tuesday, February 27, 2018

Read I Timothy 2:3-4, 2 Peter 3:9 & Romans 10:8-13.

Again, God desires that all come to a saving relationship with Him. The same longing in Jesus’ voice as He looks to Jerusalem belongs to God toward each of us. God so desperately wants a relationship with us. But it’s our choice; God will not force us to choose Him, but will continue to pursue, continue to show us His love, hoping, longing, that we will accept His gift. Francis Thompson described this pursuit in

his poem, “*The Hound of Heaven.*” Here is just a portion:

*I fled Him, down the nights and down the days;
 I fled Him, down the arches of the years;
 I fled Him, down the labyrinthine ways
 Of my own mind; and in the mist of tears
 I hid from Him, and under running laughter.
 Up vistaed hopes I sped; And shot, precipitated,
 down Titanic glooms of chasmed fears,
 From those strong Feet that followed, followed after.*

God will not give up on you or I. God will continue to chase us. Allow Him to catch all of you. Take time tonight to reflect on how God has pursued you.

Wednesday, February 28, 2018

**Read Luke 13:31-35; Ruth 2:12; Psalm 17:8;
 Psalm 36:7; Psalm 91:4; and Isaiah 31:5.**

In scripture, God is described as one who takes His children under His wings. God is our protector, our Heavenly Father & Mother, watching over us, covering all who choose to come under God’s “*pinions*”. Unlike the fox who preys on the young of others, God gently cares for His young.

Take time today to reflect on God, the protector. Reflect on the scriptures that describe God as one who is ready to take you under His wings. In what areas of your life do you feel like things are out of control, or you feel vulnerable, out in the open susceptible to the elements? In what way do you feel attacked, beaten down, lost? Reach out to God...tell Him everything... share your fears, your hurts, your pain...ask Him to take you under His wings and protect you. Trust God with whatever

situation you are facing and spend time tonight in prayer, in conversation with Him.

Thursday, March 1 & Friday, March 2, 2018

**Read Luke 13:31-35; Luke 19:28-40; &
Luke 22:14 thru 23:56.**

In Luke 13, Jesus is not ready to enter Jerusalem...It is not His time...but soon He will return to shouts of “*Blessed is the One who comes in the name of the Lord,*” only to be crucified shortly after...to die in order to protect and provide us with life...eternal life. Take time today to reflect on Jesus’ return to Jerusalem...His passion...His final week. Throughout Lent, let us focus on that week...His sacrifice...His love for us. May we never forget.

Saturday, March 3, 2018

Once Again...Read and Reflect On:

INVITATION TO THE OBSERVANCE OF LENTEN DISCIPLINE

How Are You Observing a Holy Lent?

Dear brothers and sisters in Christ: the early Christians observed with great devotion the days of our Lord’s passion and resurrection, and it became the custom of the Church that before the Easter celebration there should be a forty-day season of spiritual preparation. During this season converts to the faith were prepared for Holy Baptism. It was also a time when persons who had committed serious sins and had separated themselves from the community of faith were reconciled by penitence and forgiveness, and restored to participation in the life of the Church. In this way, the whole congregation was reminded of the

mercy and forgiveness proclaimed in the gospel of Jesus Christ and the need we all have to renew our faith. I invite you, therefore, in the name of the Church, to observe a holy Lent: by self-examination and repentance; by prayer, fasting, and self-denial; and by reading and meditating on God's Holy Word. To make a right beginning of repentance, as a mark of our mortal nature, let us now bow before our Creator and Redeemer in a moment of silence and reflection.

***“Create in me a clean heart, O God,
And renew a steadfast spirit within me.”***

-Psalm 51:10

***Don't Forget to
Invite Someone to Church Tomorrow!***



“These are vegetables, mother. You wouldn't want me to eat something I've given up for Lent, would you?”