

Luke 13:31-35

There's so much I want to talk about today. About God's love shown to us through Jesus. About how much Jesus cares for us. About the covenant drawn between God and Abram.

So let's start there, with the covenant. It probably seems a bit barbaric to us to think of animals being halved and lain out, but that was a common means of sealing a covenant, of setting a boarder in the time of Abram. God had promised Abram enough descendants to fill the night sky with stars. We seldom get to see a star filled night any longer what with light pollution, but if you've ever had the opportunity to be away from the city, in pure darkness, you know what God was demonstrating to Abram. More stars than a person could ever count. And Abram, he had no children! How on earth was there going to be a land populated through his offspring? He needed assurance that he had chosen to do the right thing when he left his home country and traveled to where he was a stranger in a strange land. How was he to be sure that the land would even belong to his descendants? So God gave him the instructions to set up for a covenantal agreement, one that meant something to Abram. Then when darkness came upon the earth, Abram went into what must have been a trance. Because it is recorded that a smoking pot and a torch went between the animals, sealing the covenantal agreement between God and Abram.

We know the descendants of Abram, whom we are more comfortable calling Abraham, the father of the Jewish nation. We know his descendants number more than the stars in the sky. They settled in the land God had given them until a great famine drove them to Egypt. When the Hebrew people journeyed from Egypt to the Promised Land, they returned to their God given land. David chose Jerusalem to be the capital city, and his son Solomon built the temple, the presence of God, in the capital city of Jerusalem, sealing God's prescience with God's people. Until 4 centuries later when the Babylonians attacked and took God's people out of their homeland.

Under Nehemiah the second temple was built, reclaiming Jerusalem as the capital of the Jewish nation's homeland, however they were, except for a short time period, completely under foreign rule. It is under Roman rule when Jesus is born. The Jewish people were given great latitude to practice their religion under the Roman rule as long as they paid the Roman tax and were subservient to the Romans. They were longing for a Messiah to rescue them from the cruel Roman oppression, so they did not recognize Jesus when he came as God's deliverer. So what does all this history have to do with us?

We, of course, are the descendants of those who chose to follow Jesus as Lord and Savior. But we haven't always been good followers of Christ. We sin, we fall away from what it is the Lord has called us to. We allow people to go hungry and homeless. We get angry at little things. We cheat people, maybe not in big noticeable ways, but we still at times find ourselves looking for the best way to save a dime. Or we're not happy with what we have when we see something better and we try to figure out how we can make it our own. And then we realize what we've done, we realize we've messed up, we feel miserable and alone. We feel like a motherless child, a long way from home. The lyrics come from an African slave song.

We can't know what it felt like to be sold into slavery, but there are times when we just feel despondent, lost, out of place, like a motherless child, a long way from home. Cut off from

those who love us, cut off from friends, even cut off from God. But can we be cut off from God? We can feel as though we are, we can feel as though our sin has put a wall between us and God because we are sinners and God cannot look upon sin. So where does that leave us?

It leaves us in a place where we listen for that still small voice, where we remember that we are made in the image of God, and sometimes, we cry out in sorrow, and mourning, and regret. And we hear that Jesus wants to hold us under his wings like a mother hen. This, for me brings to mind feelings of comfort and protection and warmth. Today's Psalm speaks to this... 1The Lord is my light and my salvation; whom then shall I fear? The Lord is the stronghold of my life; of whom shall I be afraid? 5For in the day of trouble God will give me shelter, hide me in the hidden places of the sanctuary,... Jesus wants to do this, he wants to take God's children into his protection. But not everyone wants that. Yet here Jesus is ready and willing to die for them. All of them.

Yet in the gospel reading we are hearing that some Pharisees, those who don't believe in Jesus as the Messiah, are warning him to get away because Herod is on a rampage to kill him. Strange that those who would like nothing better than to see Jesus moved out of their way, even go so far as wishing him dead, would be the ones warning him to watch out for Herod. Jesus must see this as well because he tells these religious leaders to go back to Herod, the Roman ruler whom these men are in collusion with, that he is doing God's will here on earth, and he isn't about to be dissuaded from his mission. He cries out in his pain for those who are rejecting his love.

And we are given a choice. Do we find our safety and security from those who function out of fear and self-interest? That's what the Jewish leaders were doing. They were afraid they were going to lose their freedom, and I'm thinking they may have had some monetary advantage in being leaders, if not, they may have felt a false sense of power being able to converse with the Roman leaders. How does that fit into your life? Is something holding you hostage? Maybe a fear of being unpopular, or a fear of losing out on something important to you if you speak your faith?

Or do you choose to find your safety in the promises of God? Do you run into the shelter of his wings, to the one who is broken and poured out in an unimaginable love for you?

The love of Jesus is something we need to know, something we need to cling to; it is what gives us hope when we face the tragedies of our lives whether that tragedy is brought on by sin or by the nature of life itself. We need to have that love and hope whenever we feel like a motherless child. And we need to know that love so that we can share it with those who are going through their dark night of the soul, those who need to be gathered in under our wings. So that we can give them comfort and reassurance that God loves them despite who they are, what they've done or where they've been.

God has made an eternal covenant with us to always be with us. Even when we break the covenant God is faithful. Through Jesus we can be redeemed.

All glory be to God.