

Sermon Lent 2 2019

March 17, 2019

Luke 13:31-35

Grace, mercy, and peace to you from God our Father, and our Lord and Savior, Jesus Christ. Amen. This morning we meditate on the Gospel Lesson, previously read, especially these words, **“How often would I have gathered your children together as a hen gathers her brood under her wings, and you were not willing!”**

I believe I’ve mentioned this in a sermon before, but I know my confirmation students have heard it *ad nauseum*. We always, always, always underestimate the effects of the fall into sin. As I say that, what do I mean? I mean that we never grasp just how deeply affected we are, not only in terms of some of the things I mention often, for example that we get sick and die. But also in the extreme sinfulness of our hearts and in our ability to rationalize and understand God’s Word and the world.

What do I mean by that? Well as we look at our understanding of the world, sin affects it. We can’t fathom what this world would be like without sin. We can’t fathom what it means not to get sick, not to have death. We can’t fathom what it’s like not to have decay. Our brains can’t process it. In fact our brains can’t process how broken our brains themselves are in that sin. They can’t grasp that that we are so unrighteous we deserve nothing but temporal and eternal punishment. We always, always, always underestimate the effects of the fall into sin.

And as we see Jesus calling to Jerusalem, we see this again. Look at His words, **“O Jerusalem, Jerusalem, the city that kills the prophets and stones those who are sent to it! How often would I have gathered your children together as a hen gathers her brood under her wings, and you were not willing!”** Here Jesus is, here He desires to gather the children of Jerusalem, the Jews, His people, to Himself, and what’s the problem? They would not. Their sin prevents them. Why? They’re underestimating the effect of the fall into sin on themselves. They are hearing Jesus’ words, and they’re thinking that they don’t need this. They either think that their historical position, their race, or their goodness is sufficient. Or perhaps they think that as they hear the preaching they know something better than He does. They’re underestimating the effect of the fall into sin.

And look at how unfortunate this is. Think about the image Jesus uses here. Think about that love of a mother hen, looking down upon her brood with care and desiring nothing to happen to them. Think about that hen lovingly spreading out her wings over those chicks and guarding them, protecting them, sheltering them from the elements and the predators that would seek to harm and destroy them. There is such love and caring in that image, isn't there?

In fact, as I describe that, something we should understand is that this is not a new image. The Lord speaks this way of His people in the Old Testament. Hear what He says in Deuteronomy through Moses: **“But the Lord’s portion is his people, Jacob his allotted heritage. ‘He found him in a desert land, and in the howling waste of the wilderness; he encircled him, he cared for him, he kept him as the apple of his eye. Like an eagle that stirs up its nest, that flutters over its young, spreading out its wings, catching them, bearing them on its pinions.’”** You see the Lord had always cared for His people in this same love.

In fact, what we see in the Old Testament is how they saw this shelter themselves. In the Psalms we have occasion after occasion where the Psalmists cry to the Lord in the knowledge that their care is found in the “shadow of Your wings.” And where was that shadow? Where was the shelter? Where the Lord promised to be with them. And where was that? At the Ark of the Covenant. You see this phrase of finding strength in the shadow of the wings should be understood liturgically, cultically. The Word was first read in the people’s hearing at the tabernacle, at the Holy Place, the place where the Ark was. And what was on the Ark? The cherubim. The angels. And what do the angels have? Wings. Does God have wings? Not that we know of, but the shelter of the people was found there at the Ark.

I mentioned a couple of weeks ago with the Transfiguration about approaching God by His promise at the Ark, and there under that promise was His presence, His footstool noted by the cherubim. In fact, I think that the cherubim on the Ark were to remind Israel of the cherubim that cut them off from Eden, that there at the Ark was the return to Eden, to Paradise. This is exactly where everyone should want to be isn't it? They should want to be there with God, they should want to be there where sin isn't. They should want to stand under those wings of the Lord and receive shelter.

And now Jesus calls them to do the same, and they are refusing. **“How often would I have gathered your children together as a hen gathers her brood under her**

wings, and you were not willing!” You see they are underestimating the effects of the fall. They are hiding their eyes from just how horrendous they really are. And their willingness to come to God is clouded by that sin such that they are willing to do anything else but that.

You see that’s just how bad this sin is. The solution to it is right before their eyes, and they would rather, that is they desire, they will to have any other solution. They would not. Paul describes this same condition in another way in His Epistle lesson. He says, **“many, of whom I have often told you and now tell you even with tears, walk as enemies of the cross of Christ. Their end is destruction, their god is their belly, and they glory in their shame, with minds set on earthly things.”** In view of that, Jesus speaks a stern warning, **“Behold, your house is forsaken.”** “Jerusalem, you will be left. People of my Old Covenant, hear and believe, don’t turn away. When you remain in that sin, your house is forsaken. I’m not there. I’m gone. It’s empty.” And as I say that and we think about this in the context of the Ark, we see this fulfilled in the year 70 A.D. with the destruction of the Temple by the Romans. Isn’t it interesting that there has not been a temple since that time? Isn’t it interesting that at this time even that is an impossibility because that is the site of the Dome of the Rock, an Islamic Mosque?

Now to be clear, this isn’t what Jesus wants for them. Likewise, as we hear all of this, we should take heed. It’s so easy for us to fall into the same trap. For we too always, always, always underestimate the effects of the fall. We find ourselves so willing to be attracted to the wisdom of those whose wisdom is not that of the Scriptures. We find ourselves so willing to make our gods our bellies, to worship the things of this world instead of finding our hope in the eternal citizenship that we have in Christ. In fact, sometimes we even find our hope in our earthly citizenship in this kingdom and concerning ourselves more with the goings on of this kingdom than those of the eternal.

But Christ desires for us to remain under His wings. Should this kingdom fall away, should our sources of food and wealth disappear, should we be abandoned by everyone and everything, there He would be standing over us with His wings outstretched, guarding and protecting us still.

You see that’s the promise that He has made to us in coming to us in His Holy Incarnation. As He came into this flesh—which as I speak of the Ark, do you know that John tells as that when Jesus became flesh He dwelt among us, but that word for dwelt

could be translated tented. It's from the same word for the tent of the tabernacle. There in that flesh Jesus tabernacled among us as the new Ark. And think about the Ark and its role in the Day of Atonement. Do you know how that worked? The High Priest of Israel on that day would pour out the blood of the goat, and then he would carry that blood into the Holy of Holies and pour some of it on the mercy seat, on the Ark. Then he would carry that same blood out to the altar in the front of the Tent of Meeting. The Altar where the sacrifices were brought daily, and those offerings—having brought the sins of the people day in and day out—would be covered in the blood from the mercy seat. The Holiness of God would come from the Ark and cover the sins of the people in the blood. In this flesh of Jesus, He has become the new Ark and He has done the same with His blood.

On the altar of the cross, we see that Jesus has entered into human flesh seeking the lost. He has poured out His blood there, where the sins of the people have been embodied in His flesh, and He has covered those sins with the holiness of His blood. This sin has then been declared forgiven as Jesus has returned to sight in the resurrection.

Even still, then He brings this sacrifice to you. He covers you in the shelter of His wings as He has baptized you, made you His own, fed you with His body and blood, the very sacrifice of the cross. And He promises all of this, all of His care to you.

What do you do then? Heed that example. Let not your house be forsaken. In this Lenten season, repent. Repent of your sin. Don't underestimate just how much that sin affects you. Of course, as I say that, you still will. You'll always underestimate it. You'll never be able to see just how wretched our estate is under that sin. None of us can. But Jesus wants to free you from it, wants to shelter you in His blood in it. Heed that call then. Repent. As Luther says of baptism—it signifies that the Old Man in us should by daily contrition and repentance be drowned and die. Drown that Old Man. Don't let Him swim. Find your shelter under the wings of Jesus. Even when it's not your own sinfulness, but the other effects of the fall, the suffering, the pain, the sorrows of death, find your shelter under those wings. Find your shelter where His sacrifice comes to you. Find your shelter with Him who has seen the fullness of the depth of sin and paid its cost in its entirety. This is what He wants for you. Amen.