

Rejected Love

Text: Genesis 15:1-12, 17-18

Philippians 3:17-4:1 (Series C. 2nd Sunday in Lent) Ps. 27

Luke 13:34-35

(Jesus said,) "Jerusalem, Jerusalem! You kill the prophets, you stone the messengers God has sent you! How many times I wanted to put my arms around all your people, just as a hen gathers her chicks under her wings, but you would not let me! And so your Temple will be abandoned. I assure you that you will not see me until the time comes when you say, "God bless him who comes in the name of the Lord.' "

Let us pray:

Marianne was in love. The boy who had won her affection was the captain of the football team. Each day Marianne would ring her best friend and tell her how much she loved Jason ... how she stayed home at night waiting for him to call ... how she bought him nice gifts for no other reason than she loved him.

Then one day when she met with her best friend at MacDonald's she sat down without saying a word. When asked if anything was wrong, she quietly said, "Jason broke up with me last night."

As the tears were streaming down her face she said, "*I loved him ... I did everything for him. Why would he do this to me? Why doesn't he love me?* The pain of *rejected love* is a terrible pain.

I saw the pain on her face as we sat and visited, *Joan (not her real name)* a friend of mine has been married for thirty odd years, she sacrificed her life and career for her marriage only to have her husband leave for another woman 15 years younger. After all her years of loving, giving, and sacrifice she stands alone with three children, it hurts as she sobs. The pain of *rejected love*.

Today we can see the pain of *rejected love* in the gospel reading as Jesus grieves over the city of Jerusalem. God loved his people so deeply. God had sent messenger after messenger to tell them how much he loved, but it was never received.

In some respects, just about any animal we would care to mention know more than people. The young at least have sense enough to stay close to momma; close to food, protection, warmth, and nurture. Such behaviour would be counter to their nature--counter to the natural order God created.

But people? That's another story. Only human beings stray; only the children of God exhibit the unnatural behaviour of turning away from the love and protection of the God who made them.

"O! Jerusalem, O! Jerusalem, killing the prophets and stoning those who are sent to you! How often would I have gathered your children together as a hen gathers her brood under her wings, and you would not!"

In those words of Jesus, we hear the voice of God's lamenting. We hear the sound of God's heart breaking. With the tender love of a mother, God loves his children. And yet, says Jesus, the children have strayed: they have killed the prophets and stoned those sent to them.

As a mother hen spreads her wings over her brood, so God would spread protective wings over his people. But unaccountably, unnaturally, unrepentantly, they would not. What chicks and kittens would not do -- could not do -- the children of God have done: they have counted the love and protection of God as nothing, choosing instead to go their own way. *"Behold your house is forsaken."* And the mother hen weeps.

How could such a thing be? How could the children of Israel have been so rebellious as to turn away from the warm wings offered to them? Especially when those wings had brought them safe through so many difficulties. Hard questions eh! But harder yet is this question:

- How could we do such a thing?
- How can we be so foolish or behave so unnaturally as to stray from the sheltering love of God?

The questions turn back on us – many times even the strongest among us desperately feel our lack of security, the absence of protective wings over us the unnatural distance that so often seems to exist between ourselves and the peaceful, presence of God.

Can any one of us say that we have never trembled through a troubled night or felt the dread of death or of old age as it draws ever nearer to us or to those we love? Who among us has not felt the fear of loneliness, or rejected love:

- or not worried about our children's future fate,
- or not been agonized by the phobias surrounding our jobs and finances?

Is there anyone here this morning, who has not experienced the pain of a relationship gone sour or love rejected?

Who among us can say that there have not been mornings when we've been ashamed to look in the mirror at our own reflection because of something we've said, or done; ashamed because of how we've hated, envied, or lusted, while we wandered far from God's wings?

"How often would I have gathered your children together as a hen gathers her brood under her wings, and you would not!" God's lamenting cry rings sharply in our ears because we too *"would not."*

- We would not hear the call of comfort, the cry of invitation.
- We would not trust our worries, our pain, our sin to the wings of God, preferring instead to peck here and there in the hopes that we will stumble upon some crumbs that will fill our stomachs, numb our minds, and take our thoughts away from the realization that more often than not we too have wandered far from the protection of God.

We do not need to drown our minds in day's troubles: the irritations, hassles, and problems of work.

We do not need to come home and numb our minds with food and drink, household chores, television, family problems, family joys, even churchly commitments. Or any thing to keep us from thinking about the strange silence of God in our daily lives.

We don't need to do this because God is speaking to us, God is speaking to us in the words he does not say, as much as he speaks to us in the words that he does say. *"How often would I have gathered your children together as a hen gathers her brood under her wings, but you would not... but you would not... but you would not... Listen - hear - the voice of the invitation, the call to protection and holy love. Come unto me, all you who are weary and heavy laden, and I will give you rest.*

- Even now the Mother Hen would gather us in the shadow of outstretched wings, warm and secure next to the beating heart of God.
- Even now God bids us to come, to trust, and to rely on his protection and nurture and guidance through our harrowing days. And this is not the first time God has called us.
- God has called to us when we prosper, and remember to return to him with thanks given, and to share with our brothers and sisters in holiness and righteousness.
- God has called to us in times of joy and certainty, to acknowledge his part in it, and to go to those who despair, and share with them the gift of hope.
- God has called to us in times of sin urging us to return to him in the confidence that we will be forgiven and that life can start anew. (*Ask the question when was your first call?*)

God has called to us many times - that first call came long ago when we were born in the water of baptism, in the blood of Christ, into his family, his holy brood. Through our baptism God births us and pledges to us the firm devotion, love and protection that we only dimly see mirrored in the behaviour of animals.

But where animals can and will protect and care for their young only for a time, God pledges *love* and *nurture* us for all eternity. This is **true** security, **true** protection we are offered.

Rather than some empty promise that nothing bad will ever happen to us, this promise assures us that whatever does happen to us, whatever pain or rejection or problems that may plague us.

Whatever fear may face us now, whatever sin may assail us now, we will never, never be forgotten or found defenceless or alone. For we stand under the protection of *God's wings*, shaded by *God's forgiveness*, strengthened by *the body and blood*, which comes to us in the Eucharist (*Celebration of Thanksgiving*).

I conclude with this true story. Several years ago, I had a spiritual mentor by the name of *Edwin Goldstein*, a Norwegian, a farmer, a Lutheran, and a commitment and faithful member of my first parish in Herbert, Saskatchewan. Real man of God, he tells a story that has remained with me until this day.

He tells that on one hot summer day during the dirty thirties on the prairies. A wild fire raged through their grain field destroying almost every thing on its path and nearly taken down their farm house.

The family stood by helplessly as the fire ravaged acre after acre of precious grain. After the fire had died down, Edwin and older brother Oliver walked through the field to see if there was anything left to harvest for that year.

As they sorted through the charred field, they came upon a prairie chicken lying in the field, her top feathers were scorched brown by the fire's heat, her neck limp other words it was dead hen. Edwin says he, used his boot to kind of kick the dead hen. As he did, he felt a movement.

Suddenly, chicks came rushing out from beneath her burnt body running in different directions. The chicks survived because they were insulated by the shelter of the mother hen's wings, protected and saved even as she died to protect and save them.

Edwin said with tears in his eyes, that day he understood this very Scripture passage from Luke: *"How often would I have gathered your children together as a hen gathers her brood under her wings..."* (Luke. 13)

This morning, once again, Jesus Christ calls you and me. He calls us to the shelter of his protecting wings. He calls you and me to the safety of his arms stretched out for us on the cross. God calls us through the healing power of the Word and Sacraments.

He calls us to trust him, no matter what our fears, hurts, rejection, or troubles; to trust that his outstretched arms are strong enough, his wings broad enough to keep us safe. As we progress through this Lenten season, let's call to mind how often and how easily we do forget that God's love is at our disposal to help us through every day.

Let's rejoice in the knowledge that God is serious when he says he is our mother hen who wants to embrace us under his wings. Let's ask God to develop in us the same kind of mother hen attitude toward one another.

Today Jesus invites us to run under his wings of safety and warmth. And in the shadow of those wings we are saved. While awaiting the *Blessed...one who comes in the name of the Lord*.

Let us join with the psalmists who sums everything up like this: *He will keep you safe from all hidden dangers ...He will cover you with his wings, you will be safe in his care; Amen.*

Prayer concerns: *Matilda Molyneaux-Piper, Shirley Walker, Hanne Bourgeoise, Sven Berg, Astrid Hylland, Ellen Eriksen, Euclide & Ellen Dahal-Lanteigne, Karen Abazio, Pastor Timothy, the dire tension between Russia and Ukraine, Protectors at various places in Canada, Covid -19 patients, essential and Frontline workers, Note: of thanks to God as the Covid-19 virus is easing off and more restrictions are being lifted, and finally Families of departed souls in recent weeks and months.*

Prayer: O Jesus, our Christ, blessed are You who comes to gather us as Your own brood, not as enemies of Your Cross, but with willing, faithful, and trusting acceptance in our citizenship of heaven, this day and always. We ask through the Holy Spirit, our Advocate; and our Creator, Most High; who together with You are One God, forever and ever. **Amen.**

Make melodies in your heart with these hymns:

- **Eternal Lord of Love, Behold You Church # 321**
- **Jesus, Keep Me Near the Cross # 335**
- **I Surrender All (n/a in our hymn book)**

HAPPY BIRTHDAY

n/a

WEDDING ANNIVERSARY

n/a

March 13, 2022