

Genesis 15:1-12, 17-18

Psalm 27

Philippians 3:17-4:1

Luke 13:31-35

Sermon March 13th, 2022

Jesus Doesn't Give Up on Us

When taking a look at Jesus' ministry in its entirety, we see that Jesus invests a lot of his time and energy into building a relationship with us. Whether it is listening to us when no one else will, or spending an afternoon talking with us. Teaching us about the kingdom of God. Whether it is taking the time to heal us, or offering us compassion and forgiveness when the people around us want to condemn us. Whether it is walking with us in the wilderness, or appearing to us as the resurrected Christ in midst of our grief and despair. Giving us hope even during the grimmest of circumstances. Whether it is calling us his friend. Humbling himself before us. Or dying to set us free from our oppressors. Whether it is loving us even when we are at our worst, or showing us patience when we struggle to get it. Jesus invests a lot of his time and energy into building a relationship with us.

This is why Jesus is sent to us. To grow in relationship with us. So to, draw us closer to God. To reconcile us with God. To reconcile us with a God who in the Garden creates us to be in relationship with God. A God who, as we hear in our reading of Genesis this morning, makes a covenant with Abraham to be their God. A God, who through Christ, invites us, the Gentile people, to be part of this covenant.

God longs to be in relationship with us, and puts a lot of time and energy into this relationship. Including coming to us in the life of Jesus (**Image**).

Unfortunately, we can find it hard to reciprocate this love, this time and energy, when it comes to our relationship with God. When it comes time to our relationship with Christ. We can get too busy, or we can get too overwhelmed by our suffering. We can get sidetracked by an appealing message (**Image**), or we can feel paralyzed by our guilt. Our feelings of unworthiness. We can pridefully push God away, wanting to do things for ourselves. Or we can find it hard to listen to what Jesus has to say to us. Partly, because what Jesus has to say to us is challenging to hear.

Sometimes we become reactive to this challenging message. We hear this in our gospel this morning. There are people who want to kill Jesus. There are others that want Jesus to just go away already.

Well, in response to our struggles with reciprocating this time, energy, and love that Jesus gives us, Jesus laments. Jesus expresses his frustration and sadness when our relationship isn't going well (**Image**).

Now we can empathetically relate to Jesus here. We have been in relationships where a person doesn't reciprocate the time, energy, and love we do. Where we feel like we give and they take. Where we are the one always initiating. Where it is obvious, but we are seldom ready to see, that they just don't feel the same way about us as we do about them. We have been in these relationships, and know how frustrating it is to keep giving the time, energy, and love needed to keep the relationship going. We have felt the hurt, the sadness that comes when our love is not reciprocated.

Fortunately, when we notice these challenges in our relationships, we often try to seek help. We sit down with the person and communicate our feelings, hoping we can work on our relationship. If this doesn't work. We might invite a third party to help us better communicate with each other. Like a therapist or a mediator or a trusted friend (**Image**). Sometimes this help does make a difference. Sometimes after all this intervention the relationship falls apart.

Whatever the case, we usually don't give up right away when we find ourselves in a relationship where the love we give isn't reciprocated.

Well Lent is a season that gives us an opportunity to be more intentional in working on our relationship with God. The messages we receive during Lent through word and song help us reconnect with those things we do to connect with God.

For example, in Lent we are encouraged to take more time to pray. To communicate with God. To share our feelings of thanksgiving, lament, and love with God. To listen for God's voice and direction for our lives. Communication is the foundation of creating a healthy relationship with God, and with one another.

In Lent, we are encouraged to fast from those things that interfere with our relationship with God. To make more space in our lives for God.

In Lent, we are encouraged to take more time to worship (**Image**). To listen to God's hopeful message being proclaimed. To taste the forgiveness in the bread and in the wine. The body and blood of our saviour Jesus Christ. To feel reassured in God's promise that God will not give up on us.

As we hear in our gospel this morning, even with the death threats. Even with the pleas to just go away already. Jesus doesn't give up on us. Jesus keeps healing us. Jesus keeps cleansing us from unhealthy spirits. Jesus enters Jerusalem giving us an opportunity to shout, "Blessed is the one who comes in the name of the Lord." Giving us time to repent. Giving us time to welcome the kingdom of God into our lives.

Jesus will face suffering and death in response to his protest against those who oppress us. Jesus will reveal himself to us in the resurrected Christ. Giving us hope

that Jesus' love for us will overcome our oppression. Jesus will do all of this for us, which will lead us to being reconciled with our God.

Jesus' whole purpose in coming into this world is to reconcile us with our God. Jesus is all about relationships. And hopes this longing for relationship with God, and with one another, will pour out into the hearts of those who follow him.

In Lent, we are encouraged to give. To reciprocate this love not only to Christ, but also, to one another. Caring for each other. Building healthy and thriving relationships with one another.

Lent gives us an opportunity to grow in our relationship with God. Lent reassures us that Christ doesn't give up on us. But, will keep healing us. Will keep cleansing us. Will keep loving us. Hoping that this love will transform us into people who love others as Christ loves us.

Let us pray, loving God, we give thanks for your Son, who reconciles us with you. Whom longs to be in relationship with us. Whom offers us grace when we fall short. Open our hearts to reciprocate this love to you and to one another. In Jesus name we pray, **Amen.**

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