

Genesis 17:1-7, 15-16

Psalm 22:23-31

Romans 4:13-25

Mark 8:31-38

## Sermon February 28<sup>th</sup>, 2021

### *Jesus Gives It All Up for Us*

In our gospel this morning, Jesus tells us what he will have to endure for standing up for us. For challenging the political authorities for acting in oppressive ways. For healing and welcoming people who are labeled unclean, because of the current religious structure in place. For teaching things contrary to what the religious leaders are teaching. For performing miracles without ordination papers. For liberating us from sin and death.

The disciples, the followers of Jesus, are struggling, and so, Jesus has come to set them free. Jesus has come to set us all free. But what this looks like to Jesus is much different than what this was supposed to look like to those who chose to follow him.

Jesus will have to suffer on our behalf. Jesus will have to give it all up for us. Meaning that Jesus will have to face death on a cross.

In response to this foretelling of what Jesus will have to endure, Peter can't bear to listen to another word, and attempts to silence Jesus. "No, Jesus. There has to be a better way."

And Jesus says, "No, Peter. Get behind me Satan." Or in other words, "don't be an adversary. Don't stand with the oppressors and keep us living in this current system that continues to cause harm to so many of us."

In order for this movement to really take hold Jesus needs his followers to take up their crosses and follow him. To stand in unity with him. To keep challenging those who try to oppress and exclude others.

Not with violence, as many others have tried before Jesus. But, to use one's voice to point out the injustices. To no longer live with apathy. To speak up, and to speak out (***Image: ex; Someone speaking with a megaphone***). Hoping that if their voice gets loud enough things will change.

Jesus gives it all up for us. And invites us to love others in this same way.

Now if the story ended with the cross the disciples may not have seen any point in taking up their crosses to follow Jesus. And if Jesus had led a violent revolt, they would have all suffered for not. Like many others did before them.

But if Jesus does the unimaginable. If Jesus actually overcomes death on the cross. If the tomb is empty (**Image: of empty tomb**). If the resurrected Christ is standing before them. Then they will be inspired to continue the movement. Then they will be inspired to love God, others, and God's creation in self-giving ways like Jesus loves them in self-giving ways. Because, they will see the healing and renewal that comes out of this love.

Though the disciples miss the final point in Jesus' foretelling. Probably, because they couldn't understand the concept just yet. Jesus ends his foretelling with being raised from the dead.

As Paul will reiterate later on, we take up our crosses, but we also rise with Jesus. We experience God's healing and renewal when we love God, when we love people, when we love God's creation with this self-giving love.

Jesus gives it all up for us. So, that we can live in a world where we experience God's kingdom come. Not in its fullness, but at least, in part. And it is in these moments where we stand in the midst of God's kingdom come that we feel hope that things can change when we face the injustices that hurt us. That hurt God's creation.

When I hear Jesus' foretelling of his suffering, death, and resurrection, I can't help but reflect on the relationships in my life. Am I following Jesus' example? Am I loving God, people, and God's creation in self-giving ways?

Jesus invites us to take up our crosses and follow Jesus. To stand up against injustice. To love everyone and everything God created. Even if it means suffering from the powers that oppress. Even if it means giving up everything to put God and God's movement first.

For example, in our relationship with God what do we give up to make time to dwell in God's word? What do we give up to make time to pray? What do we give up to make time for worship? What do we give up to make time to be in service for others?

Lent is a season where we become more attentive to what we are able to do to create more space for God. We fast from something so that we are able to pray more. Or worship more. Or dwell in God's word more (**Image: ex; of bible with dust on it with the words read me**). Or help people in need more. We hope that through dedicating more time and energy to these practices that they become routine when Lent is in the rear-view mirror.

Unfortunately, in order to dedicate this time and energy we often find ourselves giving up something that we like doing. Often times we find ourselves making tough choices that come with some pain.

Sometimes we hear Peter's voice pop into our heads. "No Jesus. There has to be a better way."

What do we give up or give of ourselves to love God?

Or, when it comes time to the people we love, what do we give up to be fully present with them? What do we give up to nurture the love we have with them? What do we give up to reconcile with them when things are not going well? Or in other words, what do we give of ourselves to love one another as Jesus loves us?

Being married to someone takes a lot of time and energy. Sometimes you need to give up a Saturday night hockey game to spend quality time with your spouse. Sometimes you need to give up that pride that hardens your heart when you know you said something hurtful to your spouse. Sometimes you need to sit at the table for hours to work through a problem you are having (***Image: ex; of two people working through a problem together***). Sometimes this can take days or weeks or months to figure out. Sometimes you need to step into their world and experience something that may not get you all excited, but makes them happy. Helping you get to know your spouse more fully. Being a good support for them.

Like being married. Being a good friend to someone. Or being a good parent to your child. Or being a good child to your parent. Or being a good sibling. Or being a hospitable person to the people you meet. Takes a lot of time and energy. We will have to give a lot of ourselves to nurture the relationship. We will have to give of ourselves in ways that leave us a little vulnerable to heartbreak. We will have to give up on that pride that makes us think we are always right. Sometimes we will have to challenge ourselves to think differently.

What do we give up or give of ourselves to love the people we meet?

Or, what about our relationship with God's creation? How do we love God's creation with a self-giving heart? What do we give up so that our wants and needs are not so taxing on creation? What do we give of ourselves to care for God's beautiful garden?

Many of us see that creation is hurting. We want to love creation with the same love that we love God and one another with. We have grown a lot as people in being more aware of doing things that help God's creation heal and grow. From recycling to reusing to replanting to buying local to creating cleaner technologies. We are all trying to do our part to heal and renew this wonderful creation (***Image: ex; a picture of a scenic part of creation***).

At the same time, we know that like our relationship with God and one another, our relationship with God's creation isn't perfect by any means. We often struggle to live by Christ's example of self-giving love.

Some of the things we are being asked to give up to care for creation. To help creation experience healing and renewal are hard to give up. Things that we depend on in our everyday lives. Things that we enjoy. It isn't easy to love anything or anyone with a self-giving love. Because with this love comes pain. Comes vulnerability. Comes change.

Sometimes, like Peter, we say "No God. There has to be a better way."

What are we giving up or giving of ourselves to love creation in the same way Jesus loves us?

As we reflect on our love for God, for one another, and for God's creation. As we seek out ways to live out this self-giving love in these relationships more fully. We hear God's word this morning. God's word that says, "I will be God to you." God's word that says, "I will give of myself for you." God's word that points us to the resurrection of Jesus. The Easter story that we journey towards in Lent. The Easter story that reassures us that through Jesus Christ we experience God's self-giving love in our lives. The Easter story that reassures us that when we too live out this love, we see God's healing and renewal come alive in our relationship with God, with one another, and with God's creation. That when we see this self-giving love at work in Christ, and in ourselves, we are standing in the presence of God's kingdom come. What other inspiration do we need?

Let us pray, self-giving God, help us love as Jesus does. In self-giving ways. Loving you, one another, and your creation. So that everyone and everything in all of creation will experience your healing and renewal. **Amen.**

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