

#15 15-16

Psalm 27

Genesis 15:1-12, 17-18

Philippians 3:17 - 4:1

Luke 13:31-35

Sacred Ground Will Transform

At that very hour some Pharisees came and said to him, "Get away from here, for Herod wants to kill you." He said to them, "Go and tell that fox for me, 'Listen, I am casting out demons and performing cures today and tomorrow, and on the third day I finish my work. Yet today, tomorrow, and the next day I must be on my way, because it is impossible for a prophet to be killed outside of Jerusalem.' Jerusalem, Jerusalem, the city that kills the prophets and stones those who are sent to it! How often have I desired to gather your children together as a hen gathers her brood under her wings, and you were not willing! See, your house is left to you. And I tell you, you will not see me until the time comes when you say, 'Blessed is the one who comes in the name of the Lord.'"

What we have here is, Jesus, doing his ministry through Galilee and Perea ~ and those who are in power in those areas are feeling a bit intimidated by his presence. So they attempt to save face in front of those coming to Jesus by seeming to be concerned for his well being. Jesus is aware of their true motivations and their true connections. By sending them "back" to Herod, he is implying that they have access to him! By calling Herod a fox, he gains the trust of the people who are being oppressed by Herod, and those who hear him are given a sense of awareness and unity ~ they know they are not alone.

Now, imagine that Jesus was out for political power through his ministry! Then this would be a perfect moment in for a call to action! Now would be when he could take the emotions of those people and whip them into a call to arms! "I tell you we must fight this fox! We must stand up to him!" THAT would be such a temptation. But he doesn't do this! Oddly - he begins talking about chickens - rather frail creatures - and one of their greatest predators is the fox! And Jesus compares himself, therefore aligns himself in the comparison with the weak Chicken! "How often have I desired to gather your children together as a hen gathers her brood under her wings."

And instead of a call to arms, he is basically telling them that he knows he is going to die - but not yet. He tells them he isn't going to die until he gets to Jerusalem. So he is calling the Pharisees' bluff, while teaching an object lesson. The chosen ones of God are scattered all over the place, and in spite of God's attempts over the years to unify them, they have killed the prophets and stubbornly refused to unite in compassion and caring for each other, as Jesus was living and showing. Instead the example being set in Jerusalem is to do what these Pharisees were doing - maneuvering for worldly/political power.

So, here we have the chicken (Jesus) speaking truth to power and the fox backs down, for now. Time and time again, Jesus is standing his ground and not being intimidated but those who had the truth NOT in them. The only way they could finally get to Jesus in order to attempt to truly silence him, is in the dead of the night, with someone from the inside. And God was with Jesus so that even after they had done their worst ~ Jesus would still be standing on his sacred Ground speaking and living God's truth.

We heard in the Philippians: "He will transform the body of our humiliation that it may be conformed to the body of his glory, by the power that also enables him to make all things subject to himself." And from Genesis: "and he believed the Lord; and the Lord reckoned it to him as righteousness." And therefore God made a covenant with Abram which goes down in history to this day!

This image of Jesus standing up to the messengers of Herod reminded me of a quote from Brenè brown: "Don't Puff up, don't shrink, stay on your sacred ground." This was from her book on "Daring Greatly", a book for people who are trying to be a force for good in the world. And I cannot think of a more perfect description of the Christian faith, and the calling of the Lenten season, than to pick up our crosses for the doing good in the world.

For our faith is not for our benefit alone. Abram didn't ask God when he was going to finally be content - he asked God "How ..." a word with tremendous potential - an open ended question about process not what the prize would be. And his reward was for generations of blessed ancestors. Not some personal joy at the moment, but generations ~ a world of benefits!

In Paul's letter to the Philippians, he talks about people whose faith is based on their own desires and wants: "Their end is destruction; their god is the belly; and their glory is in their shame; their minds are set on earthly things. But our citizenship is in heaven, and it is from there that we are expecting a Savior, the Lord Jesus Christ. He will transform the body of our humiliation that it may be conformed to the body of his glory, by the power that also enables him to make all things subject to himself." Not only will Christ transform us as individuals, but will transform the world through us! But we have to be transformed first.

It was Christ who was sharing the power of God as being exemplified in being a Hen protecting her chickens. It is the compassion and the vulnerability, the willingness to sacrifice one's self (and this means not only a life, but your own desires and wishes) it is these things which exemplify God! Christ specifically told his followers to care for the poor, the hungry, the widows, the strangers, those in jail, our enemies . . . the list goes on and on as to who we, as followers of Christ have been called to serve.

The promise that was given to Abram was generations of blessed. The promise that we have from Jesus' suffering, sacrifice and resurrection is a life in connection with the eternal! There is no more wall between humanity and God we have full access, when we are one with Christ.

This is why seeking with all our powers to be true Christians is so vital for each of us and for our future generations - because we can live in unity with God and each other through our daily lives. And I don't know, but I am venturing to state that I believe we have all had experiences of the eternity of God at some point in our lives. We may never have really named it as such - we may have even fully blown it over and not seen it as a touch of God - but I believe God has shown God's self through us often. It may have been the perfect word from a dear one, it may have been our hearts being moved to go that extra mile to do a favor for someone, there are so many possibilities of the divine breaking through from the heaven to the earth! Our belief that God so wants to be with us is what makes us open for the possibility of experiencing the eternity. And that is what Lent is about - keeping our eyes and ears and hearts open - seeking through all possible ways - to KNOW what we believe. May this Lent be a blessing now and for generations! Amen