Dr. Hugh Hamilton

Trinity Presbyterian Church – Pensacola, FL

March 17, 2019 Lent 2, Cycle C

**JESUS ON THE MOVE: Jesus Moves Toward the Cross**

Luke 13:31-35 Genesis 15:1-18

INTRO: The next few Sundays we will explore God’s work through the travels and teachings of Jesus as he moves toward Jerusalem and his crucifixion. You cannot remain the same when Jesus encounters you. His love changes you and compels you to follow him and his example.

I read of a man wanting to go on vacation, but he couldn’t decide whether to go to Salt Lake City or Denver. He wanted to visit Denver, but money was tight, so he decided to let the amount of the fare make his decision for him. He called one airline and asked what the fare was to Denver.

“Airfare to Denver is $300 per person,” said the reservation agent.

Then he asked, “What about Salt Lake City?”

“Oh,” said the agent, “we have a really special rate right now to Salt Lake City . . . only $99, but there is a stopover.”

“Where?” asked the man.

“In Denver,” the agent answered.

 I hope he was able to stay in Denver once he got there . . . but who knows?

 Usually it pays in life to know your destination before you set out on your journey.

**Do you know where you are headed in life? Do you know how you are going to get there?**

 **Have you counted the cost of what it will take to get you there?**

In Genesis 15, God assures Abraham that God is on this journey with Abraham toward the Promised Land and by way of an animal sacrifice God ratifies his promise to Abraham that he will preserve his people, guarantee Abraham a son as heir to the covenant; that the Israelites will secure their land and their future and that Abraham shall die an old man, secure and in peace. God has a plan, a goal, a destination and a destiny for his people. It’s reassuring to know where you are heading in God’s will.

**Jesus knew where he was going.** InchaptersofLuke’s gospel preceding our reading today, Jesus has encountered growing opposition and obstacles to his ministry by the Pharisees, the spiritual leaders, and by Herod, the political leader. Despite the opposition, in Luke 9:51 we read, “*(Jesus) resolutely set his face to go to Jerusalem…”*  Jesus knew it was God’s will that he must suffer and die on the Cross that awaited him in Jerusalem; that was his destiny and thus his destination. Jesus states in verse 33 of our text today, *“I must journey on today and tomorrow and the third day, for it cannot be that a prophet should perish outside Jerusalem!”* Jesus knew that he will die in Jerusalem and yet he did not turn back. He was committed. He cared too much to turn back. He tells the Pharisees who come to warn him about Herod’s plot, *“You tell that fox that I will reach my goal.”* “I will not be deterred, I will keep on, I will reach my goal! I must press on, there’s no turning back, I will not be interrupted!”

**Why? Why was Jesus so determined to go to Jerusalem and die on the cross?**

**Because Jesus loved his people, because he loves you and me!**

Jesus compares his love for Jerusalem to a mother hen’s love for her chicks and her desire to gather them under her wings and protect and cherish them. But the chicks themselves, Jerusalem, God’s children, have rebelled against God; they are sinful, selfish chicks, stubborn and rebellious.

 Do you sense the tension?

 Jesus loves Jerusalem, and yet his love for her will be the death of him.

 We are Jerusalem…. Jesus’ love for us is so strong that it leads to his death.

Later, on Palm Sunday, as Jesus approached Jerusalem and saw the city, he wept over it and said, *“If you, had only recognized on this day the things that make for peace--but now they are hidden from your eyes. The days will come upon you when your enemies will build an embankment against you and encircle you and hem you in on every side. They will crush you to the ground, you and the children within your walls. They will not leave one stone on another, because you did not recognize the time of God’s coming to you” (Luke 19:41-44).* Forty years later that prophecy was fulfilled. The Roman army captured Jerusalem and destroyed the Temple.

 Jesus loved the people of Jerusalem. But he could not help them if they rejected his message of salvation. On that day, all he could do was weep for the city.

Jesus knows that nothing can stop his death…but nothing, even his own death, can stop him from loving his children. Opponents threaten Jesus from the outside, but he keeps moving toward the object of his love, Jerusalem. The Jews reject his love, but still Jesus stays on track to fulfill God’s will and to reveal God’s love.

**It is Lent, and we are on the road to Jerusalem.**

Unless we commit ourselves to face Jerusalem, to face the cross, to face the fact that our stubborn sinfulness cost Jesus his life, we can’t take it all in, we can’t comprehend the price of our sin, nor God’s steadfast love for us!

Will you set your face to Jerusalem, as did Jesus?

Will you commit to meet God there face to face and surrender your life to Him?

Are you committed to follow Jesus for your lifetime,

 or are you be deterred by people who don’t share your dedication to Jesus?

 By obstacles outside us that challenge us?

 By the obstacles that arise within our own hearts and weaken our resolve to be Christ followers?

Jesus is determined to reach Jerusalem,

 He is determined to reach you and me, to renew our hearts and save our souls.

 His determination he will not be blocked – even by the excuses and obstacles we put in his way.

**Jesus is on the move Jesus and he will move *beyond all* obstacles, in order to reach us,** to gather us under his wings like a mother hen to protect and cherish us! To save us and to deliver us!

The people of Israel rejected Jesus and thus, Jesus wept.

 He did not weep out of weakness, nor in defeat, but out of compassion,

 He went to Jerusalem to bear witness to his Father’s love and salvation.

 Jesus looked death in the face and gave his life for a cause bigger than himself.

RESCUE BY CHIEF: Bryan Chapell shares a story told by Paul and Carolyn London who are missionaries in Sudan, one of the most dangerous places on earth.

 In Sudan traditionally the strongest man in a tribe is the chief. Not just because the chief must wear a very large headdress and heavy ceremonial gear, Paul says, “but there are other reasons . . .”

 “Water is very scarce where these people live, so they have to dig deep wells. These are not wells as we know them--with brick walls, a pulley, and a bucket at the end of a rope. The African people sink a narrow well shaft as much as 100 feet into the ground. Even though the well is deep, the ground water of that dry land seeps very slowly into it and there is never a drop to waste. If the water were too easy to reach, the people might not use it sparingly, or an enemy might steal the next day’s supply at night. So, the tribesmen cut alternating slits into the wall of the well all the way down to the water. By alternating his weight from one leg to the other, a man can use these slits as steps to walk down the shaft to the water. Only the largest, strongest men can make the arduous climb down the well and back up again with a full water skin for the whole tribe.

 “One day a man carrying water out of the shaft fell and broke his leg. He lay at the bottom of the well. No one dared to help because no one had the strength to make the climb carrying another man. The chief was summoned. When he saw the plight of the injured man, he doffed his massive headdress and discarded his ceremonial robe. Then the chief climbed down into the well, took the weight of the injured man on himself, and brought the man to safety. The chief did what no one else could do.” (Chappell).

 The chief had to be strong. The welfare of the tribe depended on him.

Jesus wept as he looked over Jerusalem not because he was weak but because he was magnificently strong. He cared for the people of Jerusalem. He would gladly have carried them out of the well if they would let him. *“Jerusalem, Jerusalem,”* he cried. *“You who kill the prophets and stone those sent to you, how often I have longed to gather your children together, as a hen gathers her chicks under her wings, and you were not willing.”* Does Jesus weep over our nation too? Over our world today, given our conflicts and hunger and poverty and oppression and sinfulness?

**As much as Jesus cared for Jerusalem he cares for every man, woman, youth, and child on this earth, no matter where they may live or who they may worship. That, of course, means that**

***he cares for you!***

RESCUE FROM ABOVE: Pastor Ron Hutchcraft recounts a news story a few years ago about an earthquake that rocked the mountains in Nepal. “Thousands of people lost their lives,” he writes. “Many more found their world, their homes, their very lives wiped away…. Some who survived the quake faced the prospect of dying in the aftermath.” For example, there were climbers on Mt. Everest, trapped on the mountain by massive avalanches. Eighteen of them died when part of Everest collapsed on their base camp. “There were 140 surviving climbers, but when they tried to go down through the escape route, it was impossibly blocked by fallen rocks. And as time passed, their food was running out; their water was running out.”

 But then, when it looked like they would all perish, there was a wondrous sound in the sky. …Helicopters! One after another these helicopters somehow landed on that mountain, saving those climbers, taking out two at a time.

 A 27-year-old man named Rishi was trapped beneath a collapsed hotel, lying amidst the stench of dead bodies for 82 hours under mountains of concrete. He was running out of hope. Then, after ten hours of digging through concrete, the rescuers broke through.

 Rishi is alive . . . the climbers are alive. Why? Because the rescuers came.

 “One six-letter word,” says Hutchcraft, “that was the difference between life and death for the

 men on the mountain and the man in the rubble. That six-letter word was “Rescue.”

 “Hope in Nepal,” says Ron Hutchcraft, “depended on--as it is in so many disasters--a rescuer from above. And that,” he says, “is where [this news story] intersects my life and yours. Because hope for [us also] depended on a rescuer from above. At the spiritual crossroads of [our lives we were] trapped in a place where we would have died. Except our Rescuer came. Jesus. The One called ‘Savior’ by millions of people around the world. The Bible says . . . in Galatians 1:3, *‘Jesus gave His life for our sins . . . in order to rescue us.’* Not to start a religion. Not to be an example or a teacher. But to rescue us. So, it isn’t about a religion, called Christianity, it’s about a rescuer named Jesus. He came to rescue us at the cost of His life.” (Hutchcraft as cited in Duncan, 4).

Jesus resolutely set his face toward Jerusalem. He knew the fate that awaited him, but he did not hesitate. Why? Because he was committed. Because he was courageous. Because he cared.

 He cared for Jerusalem. He cared for the world that His Father created out of love.

 He cared for you and me.

Gregory of Nazianzus, one of the early church leaders in 381 A.D. asked, “Who is Jesus?” And he answered with these words:

 *He began His ministry by being hungry, yet He is the Bread of Life.*

 *Jesus ended His earthly ministry by being thirsty, yet He is the Living Water.*

 *Jesus was weary, yet He is our rest.*

 *Jesus paid tribute, yet He is the King.*

 *Jesus was accused of having a demon, yet He cast out demons.*

 *Jesus wept, yet He wipes away our tears.*

 *Jesus was sold for thirty pieces of silver, yet He redeemed the world.*

 *Jesus was brought as a lamb to the slaughter, yet He is the Good Shepherd.*

 *Jesus died, yet by His death He destroyed the power of death.*

Jesus did all of this because he loves you.

 Have you made Jesus the Master of your life?

 Please, journey with me to Jerusalem and experience again God‘s love in Jesus our Lord! Amen!

Sources

Chapell, Bryan. *Using Illustrations to Preach with Power* (Revised Edition).

Hutchcraft, Ron. “A Word With You,” <http://www.hutchcraft.com/>. Cited by MONDAY FODDER,

 <http://family-safe-mail.com/>.

Duncan, King. “Eyes Set on Jerusalem.” *Dynamic Preaching, March 17, 2009.*

LaGrone, Jessica. “Lenten Series: God on the Move.”In *A Preacher’s Guide to lectionary Sermon Series: thematic Plans for Years A, B, and C.* Louisville: Westminster/John Knox, 2016, 195.

*\03-17-19 Jesus on the Move 1. Jesus Moves Toward the Cross.docx*