

**Under the Wings**

March 13, 2022

**Luke 13: 31-35**

*<sup>31</sup> At that very hour some Pharisees came and said to him, “Get away from here, for Herod wants to kill you.” <sup>32</sup> 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. <sup>33</sup> 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.’ <sup>34</sup> 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! <sup>35</sup> 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.’”*

**Philippians 3:17 – 4:1**

*<sup>17</sup> Brothers and sisters join in imitating me and observe those who live according to the example you have in us. <sup>18</sup> For many live as enemies of the cross of Christ; I have often told you of them, and now I tell you even with tears. <sup>19</sup> Their end is destruction; their god is the belly; and their glory is in their shame; their minds are set on earthly things. <sup>20</sup> But our citizenship is in heaven, and it is from there that we are expecting a Savior, the Lord Jesus Christ. <sup>21</sup> 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... <sup>1</sup> Therefore, my brothers and sisters, whom I love and long for, my joy and crown, stand firm in the Lord in this way, my beloved.*



As we begin this time together, we transition from last week's passage in Luke where Jesus was tempted by Satan in the wilderness to a passage a little later in Luke where Jesus is beginning to ponder the last week of his life and the

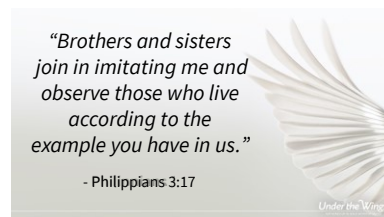
end of his ministry. Today we will be reminded that even though we are sinners, we are saved by grace. Even though we fail at times, God always remains steadfast, always calls us back into the unconditional love that we are offered through Jesus Christ our Lord. In the passage from Philippians, Paul encourages those in the church there to follow good examples of faith as Paul himself strives to follow Jesus' example of faith. Even though Paul wrestles with the things of this world, as those in that church and those in this church all do, the call of Christ is still to stand firm in the faith, trusting into God's mercy, grace, and forgiveness, leaning into that unconditional love. In order for us to do that, we all need people to walk with us on our journey of faith. With that in mind, let us begin with a word of prayer...

As we consider examples of faith and the call to lean into God's love, I want to begin with a question for you to consider. It was part of the pre-worship scroll so I hope that a few of you saw it and had time to think about it. The question was: Who has been a mentor or guide for you in your journey of life and faith? In other words, who has helped you to become the person and the believer that you are today? Would anyone be willing to share a little bit about someone who mentored you....?

*(If no one shares, read story from Monday's staff devotional on "Benevolent".)* From these stories, what are some of the common traits or characteristics of a good mentor?...

As we turn to our passage from Philippians 3, let's see what Paul has to add about being and needing a good mentor. In verse 17, the passage

begins with this invitation: *"Brothers and sisters join in imitating me and observe those who live according to the example you have in us."* Paul is not bragging here, but is

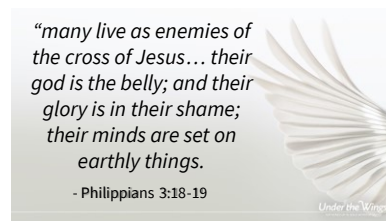


offering his example up, along with the example of others who are living faithfully, so that these new believers in Philippi can see faith being lived out in the flesh. Jesus is not there with them. There is no Bible to read. Paul is inviting those in the church to seek Jesus as he seeks Jesus. For Paul, to follow Jesus also means to follow others who are following Jesus. Paul is echoing the call to community, to walking with one another, to model Christ for one another.

Even though we have the Bible for reference, seeing faith lived out and modeled is a natural part of our discipleship process. The discipline required to follow Jesus is one that we learn from one another, one that we share together, one that we help one another with. Following Jesus is a team effort. Some of the time we are like a vessel being poured into by God and by others. Sometimes we are more like a pitcher, passing faith along to others as we pour ourselves out, into those we bless as we journey together. Each of us can think of and point to people who have mentored or guided us, just as many of us can name others that we have tried to pour into. Some shared about the receiving side of this just a moment ago. *(or... I shared one example just now of a woman's experience and of how much that meant to her as a person and as a Christian.)*

As we press on in Philippians 3, we see why there is such a great need for examples of faith. In verses 18 and 19 Paul shares the reality facing those in the Philippi church.

In these verses Paul acknowledges that *“many live as enemies of the cross of Jesus... their god is the belly; and their glory is in their shame; their minds are set on earthly things.”*



These words are just as true today as the day Paul wrote them. Many live opposed to Jesus and his way of life. Many chase after the things of this world, filling their belly, so to speak. Their minds are indeed set on the things of this world. Many people are what Paul would call ‘citizens of this world.’

This battle between good and evil, between God and Satan, was at the center of last week’s passage as Jesus spent forty days in the wilderness. This ongoing battle is a consistent theme throughout the Bible from Genesis to Revelation. In the second of this week’s lectionary readings, from Psalm 27, David speaks of God as his light, as his salvation, as his stronghold. From this place of confidence, metaphorically living under God’s wings, David asks, *“Whom shall I fear?”*



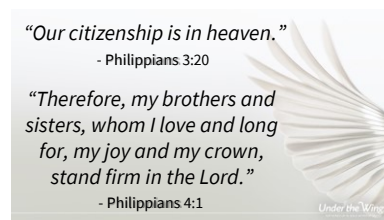
When one is walking hand in hand with God, when we are rock-solid with God, when our faith is really strong, we do not have anything to fear. But as was the case for Jesus in the wilderness and for us in our own times of weakness, Satan is always looking for an opportune time to test our faith, to challenge our trust in God. In reality, we can fear missing out on things of this world, on the bright and shiny that attracts us. That fear can lead to temptation and then on to sin. David found the antidote to temptation, the key to battling sin in his life.

In verse 4 he writes first of his desire to be close to God, saying, *"One thing I asked of the Lord, that will I seek after: to live in the house of the Lord all the days of my life."* That is living under the wings of God. David knew that it was a day-by-day, intentional choice. Each day David sought to dwell in God's presence, to be in God's house. And then in verse 11 David identifies the method that he found that enabled him to be close to God: *"Teach me your way, O Lord, and lead me on a level path."* David spent time with God, learning the word and discerning the path that God called him to walk. This too is our path to living faithfully in our daily lives: time in the word, time in prayer, time invested in seeking guidance from the Holy Spirit.

Part of what enables us to live faithfully day by day also comes from the promises of our faith. Returning to Philippians 3, Paul reminds us that first and foremost *"our citizenship is in heaven."* Created in God's image, redeemed by the blood of God's Son, our inheritance is not this earth. Paul goes on to remind us that Christ will one day *"transform"* us so that we *"conform to the body of his glory."* For those of us who confess Jesus as Lord with our lips and who believe in our hearts, we will one day stand in Christ's eternal presence, conformed into his image.



Our passage from Philippians 3 concludes with these words of encouragement: *"Therefore, my brothers and sisters, whom I love and long for, my joy and my crown, stand firm in the Lord."* Setting our hearts and minds on Christ, just as Paul and many other believers did, we can hold onto the promise of glory and eternal life.



In our community of faith, we find brothers and sisters who can walk alongside of each of us, brothers and sisters who bring us fortitude when needed, toughness when needed, conviction when needed. And, in turn, we can be a brother or sister in Christ for others.



This longing to gather all people under his wings, this desire to walk with others, this hope for all people to experience eternal glory – all of these things are reflected in Jesus’

words in Luke 13. Please return with me to our gospel passage. As we begin, a little context for today’s passage. Just before today’s passage in Luke 13 Jesus speaks of the ‘narrow door’. What Jesus speaks of in verses 22-30 also mirrors the reality that Paul spoke of in our Philippians passage, where he wrote of the many people chasing after the things of this world.

Someone in the crowd asks Jesus, in verse 23, *“Lord, will only a few be saved?”* In response Jesus says, *“Strive to enter through the narrow door; for many, I tell you, will try to enter*



*and will not be able.”* Further explaining what he means in verses 25-27, Jesus tells the crowd and the disciples that many will say they ate and drank with him and that they heard his teachings. But sadly, Jesus says many of these who think they are righteous and holy really do not know him. Because they only know of Jesus, there will be *“weeping and gnashing of teeth”* when the day of judgment comes. Jesus extends the underlying point, stating that many will come from all over the earth – from the east and west, from the north and south – and they will *“eat in the kingdom of God.”*

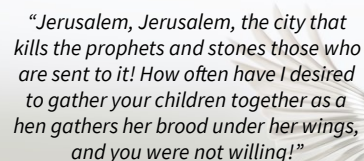
Many will come from outside of Israel, from outside of the Jewish faith, to one day enjoy eternity in God's presence. Jesus is speaking primarily to the Jews and religious leaders who think they alone will inherit the kingdom of God because of their ancestry or because of their esteemed place in the social hierarchy.

At times we can place our trust in our past, in our claims of faith, in the fact that we go to church *most* Sundays. We can also place our trust in the things of the world, walking on that wide road, on the path that leads to destruction, as Paul said in Philippians 3. When we are on that wide road, in our moments when we are struggling with sin, we can come to see ourselves as unworthy or as undeserving of the love of God. Thinking that God is disappointed in us or is critically judging us, we can become defined by our sins and our circumstances instead of by our inheritance. We can come to see ourselves as broken, as sinners, as insignificant and unloved. When there, we feel cut off from God. If that is where you are now, or when you again find yourself there, remember these words of lament and of hope, soon to come from the lips of Jesus, shared by the prophet Luke.

As we continue the story in verse 31, Jesus is approached by some of these religious leaders. They warn him, telling him that Herod is out to kill him. This is odd – coming from those already intent on doing away with Jesus. Jesus responds with these curious words: *“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.’”* In essence Jesus is telling the religious leaders to run on back to their ‘puppet master’ and to tell him that Jesus is in charge of his own destiny, that Jesus is not planning to run away or to hide from anyone.

Jesus knows the mission and the plan that lies ahead. He knows the work that he was sent to accomplish. He knows those who he came to save. He knows you and he knows me.

In verse 34, Jesus pauses to lament, to consider what could have been. Hear the sorrow and sadness in these words of Jesus: *“Jerusalem, Jerusalem, the city that kills the prophets*



*“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!”*

- Luke 13:34

Under the Wings

*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!”* If only history had been different. If only the ancients had listened to all of the other prophets. If only they were willing. But, alas, it was not so. This remains the case with Jesus. And yet Jesus still longs, yearns, deeply desires to gather the lost and the broken into his kingdom, into the protection found beneath his wings. There is a deep love for the people of God here in Jesus’ words.

Jesus has the same love for you and for me, for all people. He longs to bring all of us into the family of God, to shelter all of us in the shadow of his wings. My friends, we are not the first people to feel outside of God’s love at times. We are not the first people to be broken and sinful, to be in need of a Savior. What do we do when we feel like we are a long way from Christ, a long way from where we need to be? Let us press on in Luke to find our answer.

Jesus is about to enter Jerusalem, the place that will hold a great deal of pain and testing for Jesus. With that knowledge in mind, Jesus offered this lament. It was a lament offered in great sadness.



If it could only be so, Jesus would gather all people to himself. If only it could be so, all people would accept the offer of relationship and the gift of forgiveness and salvation that Jesus offers. Jesus is not just speaking of those in Jerusalem at that moment. He is speaking of all people who are distant from his love, to all people who are lost and broken. He is speaking of you and me. Jesus longs to gather us all up, to shelter us under his wings.



What do we do when we are a long way from Christ, a long way from where we need to be? We hear his call, we listen to his voice, we walk into his love. We need to know and experience love like Christ offers. We need to be vessels that seek to be filled with that love. It is not just about us, though. We also need to be in the business of sharing that love. We need to be the proverbial pitchers, pouring that love into others. Just as we feel at times, all around us are people who feel disconnected, who feel as though no one cares, who feel like no one is there for them. There are those who feel like their past or their mistakes define them. May we be pitchers, pouring out Jesus' love so that he can gather them under his wings as well.

To be forgotten, to be overlooked, to be dismissed, that is a common experience in our world today. Chasing after the things of the world leaves people empty, alone, fragmented. Jesus' love is the antidote, the cure, the salve. His love is flowing in us and through us, inviting us and those we meet to come home, to be gathered up in Jesus. The one who longs to gather us all up, the one who desires to wrap his wings around us all is waiting, offering, hoping.

Being citizens of heaven, this is where our eternity lies. May you and I be a part of sharing that love, guiding others into Jesus' saving love. May it be so for you and for me. Amen and amen.

**GPS – Grow, Pray, Study**

- 1) *Grow*. During your journey of faith, what kind of a faith story has your life “told”?  
How have others grown in faith as they observe your walk with Jesus?
- 2) *Pray*. Who might God be leading you to walk alongside, perhaps as a mentor?  
Pray to the Spirit for discernment and guidance.
- 3) *Study*. Read Luke 13:10-18. When have you been “crippled”, either physically or spiritually? How did Jesus set you free?