

Third Sunday after Pentecost
Genesis 3:8-15
Psalm 130
2 Corinthians 4:13-5-5:1
Mark 3:20-35

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Holy Spirit Lutheran Church

Grace and peace to you all from our Lord and Savior Jesus Christ – amen.

I'll be the first to admit that when I looked up the bible readings for this Sunday, my gut reaction was simply to change them. The readings don't exactly contain the most welcoming messages of faith, hope, and love we are used to reflection on through the scriptures here at Holy Spirit.

And so when I considered that today we would be welcoming the community to come and see what our family of faith is all about through our open house - these passages simply didn't seem to fit within our plan.

But, as I read and re-read these lessons this week – I finally came to hear the message we so often lift up in this place – that God continues to love, cherish, accept, and welcome us all in amazing grace. It was a message that ran throughout even some of our more difficult scriptures today. A message affirming that God longs to be in a relationship with us - not because of what we have done – or what we might do – but because being in relationship is simply a central act of God's creation.

And if we take a moment to listen closely to the story of Adam and Eve from our first lesson we will start to hear this longing of God to be in relationship with not only us, but with all of creation.

Whether you understand this story to have literally taken place or if you hear it as a metaphor for us to consider as we grow in our faith – one thing quickly becomes clear in this early creation narrative, that God is with us – no matter what might be going on for us in our lives today.

As we hear in the third chapter of Genesis this morning, God is walking in the garden of Eden in the cool of the evening breeze. A walk God likely had taken many times before in the midst of the world they had so lovingly created.

A walk that had come to form and foster the foundation of God's relationship with all living things as they joined on this evening stroll together.

However, this evening was different from those that had come before. As a deep brokenness had come to cause Adam and Eve to hide from God – because they had been hit by the devastating truth that they had chosen knowledge over their perfect relationship with their creator.

Yet God, knowing full well that Adam and Eve had faltered breaking their relationship with the creator of all, still sets out in the garden that night, searching for Adam and Eve by name - like a parent looking desperately for their lost child - longing to be reunited with them – hoping to help carry the pain and shame that had come to separate them both that day.

And in this moment of vulnerability we do not see an angry or vengeful God in the face of humanities fall – we see a God who continues to seek us out, even when everything possible has gone wrong – because we matter to God.

All that God has ever wanted, the thing that has been at the very heart of creation since the beginning of time, has been a yearning for a relationship with all creation.

A relationship that would see God send his only son to show us once and for all that we are loved, forgiven, and held in grace – even when the world around us would try to tell us that we could never be enough.

Yet God, declares time and time again that nothing could be farther from the truth.

Because through Jesus, God is always reframing what it means for us to be in a relationship with the creator of all. Or as it was put in our gospel lesson this morning – Jesus is always reshaping what it truly means to be part of the family of God.

God's family is not brought together by blood, marriage, or even MATCH.COM. The family of God is simply founded by the greatest commandment of all – the command to love.

To love God and to love one another – just as we have experienced God's love.

So God's family, Gods relationship with us, is ultimately founded in love.

That counter cultural act of redemption and grace and has knit us together as a family of faith from generation to generation. Uniting us across our various cultural backgrounds. Inviting us to share our varied gifts and needs. While joining us to support one another in our greatest hopes and in the shadows of our doubts and fears.

Bringing us together in the beautiful diversity of each of others light to form a kaleidoscopic experience of God's family that can outlast even the darkest night.

That is the power of God's love.

It's a power that unites us from the depth of our being – declaring once and for all that each and everyone of us is cherished, accepted, and whole heartedly welcomed into the family of God.

And this is the message we have been blessed to hear and share as a community of faith for well over 50 years here on this corner of 51 Street.

A message that has brought us out into the community to know, welcome, and help sponsor refugees.

A message that has called us to ensure our friends and neighbors and faith community can find food security through the food bank, our community garden, or the parish pantry when they are in need.

A message that led us on a journey to openly welcome and affirm Lesbian, Gay, Bisexual, Trans, Queer, and Two Spirited peoples within our community of faith ten years ago. A message we were blessed to share with over 100,000 people as 30 of our friends and members walked in Edmonton's Annual Pride Parade yesterday.

Through all these messages of Love, and so many more – we are actively reframing what it means to be members of God's family and beloved children of God.

Ways of love that have blessed us to know the strength in our diversity, the relief of finding a place to be heard, a place you can simply be and find acceptance and love in return.

And so today it is our greatest hope - that whether you have been here for years or if this is your first Sunday with us - that you would know that you are welcomed, loved, and accepted by this community of faith just as you are.

Whether you are a toddler or one hundred and one.

Whether you came here for the free food or just to see what we were all about.

Whether you have a dinner reservation for six or just for one.

Whether you have a faith that could move mountains – or doubts and questions that feel like they could fill one.

You have a place here in this family of God.

Not because of who you are or what you have accomplished or done.

But because we are a people who care about relationships – just as God has cared for us.

So welcome to our Church. Welcome to our family.

Here you will always find the door open with a place for you to belong.

And may this be so among us – Amen.