**St. David’s Episcopal Church**

Bean Blossom, Indiana

Year C, Lent 2

March 13, 2022

Sermon by the Rev. Kate Wilson

### Genesis 15:1-12, 17-18 Psalm 27 Philippians 3:17-4:1 Luke 13:31-35

O God, whose glory it is always to have mercy: Be gracious to all who have gone astray from your ways, and bring them again with penitent hearts and steadfast faith to embrace and hold fast the unchangeable truth of your Word, Jesus Christ your Son; who with you and the Holy Spirit lives and reigns, one God, for ever and ever. **Amen.**

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Pope John Paul II, whom you may remember as the first Polish pope, died in 2005. When he met St. Peter at the pearly gates, they greeted each other like the brothers they were despite their 2000-year age difference and Peter invited him in to get settled in his new heavenly home. As soon as they cleared the gate, John Paul saw a magnificent mansion, up on a heavenly hill. “I wonder if that’s mine?” he mused. Peter said, “That’s Roy Cohn’s place. Nice, isn’t it?” Seeing another equally magnificent mansion, Peter chirped up with, “That’s Joe McCarthy’s spot. Nobody calls him Tail-gunner Joe around here!”

The Pope marveled. “Where will my place be?” he wondered, knowing it wasn’t a question based in his usual humility. He couldn’t stuff down his excitement.

The two walked for what seemed like hours. They came to a huge building, ancient but beautifully built. Peter held the door as they entered. Through the extravagantly appointed lobby, with carvings and priceless paintings, incense wafting in the distance. John Paul is **so** excited….until Peter opens a rough-hewn door. Inside, a simple cot, desk, wooden chair, a kneeler, and a tiny window, high up on the wall. “Here you go, your heavenly home!” Peter can read the shock on John Paul’s face. “A cell in a monastery?” the Pope said, “I don’t…..” Peter completed … “understand?”

Think of it this way, we have hundreds of Popes in here but folks like Ray and Joe are few and far between and we’re awfully glad they made it.”

Our Gospel this morning begins at verse 31. The 30 verses before that include a series of parables about changing your ways to enter the Kingdom of God, about repenting. Jesus shared those parables in a number of villages, and the last thing he said just before the Pharisees pipe up in our Gospel this morning is,

29Then people will come from east and west, from north and south, and will eat in the kingdom of God. 30Indeed, some are last who will be first, and some are first who will be last.’

The first shall be last, and the last shall be first. Just like Tail-Gunner Joe and Pope John Paul.

The message of the top dogs tumbling to last place, and the insignificant people ascending to the top of the heap is NOT what the Pharisees want to hear. So why are they warning Jesus to leave for his own safety? When did they become his latest disciples?

Jesus is not fooled by the Pharisees who are joined at the hip to Herod and Company. This is the collective power elite. No one is much farther away from Jesus than Herod. Herod built two capital cities Jesus never visited,[[1]](#footnote-1) each built in Roman grandeur to pay Rome allegiance. They are built on the backs and taxes of the people Jesus loved. They are built in belief that Herod, who is merely a Roman puppet governor, serving at the whim of Caesar, is somehow still Jewish and aligned to Abraham and to David. The bureaucratic populations of Herod’s capitals suffer from a faith amnesia in response to power, wealth, and a belief of superiority – all based on illusion. The Covenant of ages succumbs to a religion of self-will and self-worship. This moral realignment was not the result of one person’s action, but was borne of rejecting God’s will for generations, as it is today.

We don’t know if, at his end, Herod shifted his will with that of God. We do know that in this slice of our Jesus story, Jesus addresses the Pharisees’ threats without fear. He returns his attention to his journey, knowing his future, knowing the ultimate victory of the Powers that Be. Knowing, as well, how very temporary their victory will be.

Jesus laments, pleads, and offers his love all at once. The love he has offered before. The love he offers still. All that is required of us, he says, is to be willing to accept that love. To allow Jesus to protect us from all that distracts us from God’s will, to protect us and open the channel of grace and love among us. He embraces and shares the image of a hen protecting her brood of young and silly baby chicks with the warmth of her body, and strength and coverage of her wings. This brooding is a creation moment. Just as the Creator brooded over the nothingness, brooded over the soullessness, and then breathed *ruach* to bring all of creation to existence, so does Jesus brood over us even as his time comes to hand. Jesus brings new creation to our souls and our lives, if we are but willing, and answer his call. If our paths have always aligned precisely with God’s will, we need only continue forth. If a mindful tune-up is in order, the season of Lent is a time made for just that.

Receiving the Holy Eucharist, our Thanksgiving given to us by Jesus at the Last Supper, will soothe us, strengthen us, and encourage us to grasp and hold on tight to living in the will of God.

Thanks be to God.

1. Sepphoris (1st capital) and Tiberias (2nd capital) [↑](#footnote-ref-1)