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Squamish United Church

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Readings:

Genesis 15:1-12, 17-18

Luke 13:31-35

Lent, to me is a season of contrasts.

We have just left the season of Epiphany with a scene of God's glory and an affirmation of Jesus on the mountaintop and now we find ourselves in a season known for lament.

We have found ourselves in the season of giving up Chocolate or wine or whatever it is that we really love to indulge in just because we feel that is what we are supposed to do. But what does that have to do with shining the light in the dark places of the world? What does that have to do with living the abundant life and sharing the good news of Christ.

Everything I think. If there is anything that I have been reminded of over and over in the last couple of weeks it is how hard one must work to get to the goal, to win the prize. Most of us have watched athletes who have set goals, and worked hard to be at these games and we have seen them both win and lose sometimes very unexpectedly. But the ones that impress me the most are the ones who hold their heads high and are proud of what they have accomplished win or lose. Most of us have fallen in love with the alex bilodeau's and Joannie Rochette's because of the work they have done and how they honor those who have walked with them on the difficult journey of life. Lent is the time for us to journey with Jesus towards the most central moment of our faith. It is to walk a journey that is difficult but a journey that ultimately leads to new life. Lent is the season where we are given the opportunity to remember the holy journeys with us no matter how hard the road, longing for us to experience fullness of life - the resurrection life - abundance in the midst of and at the end of the road. It's the story of our faith.

This morning in our scriptures we look at people in the toughest of times. Life, authority, and power are threatening the very being of each of the people in our text.

Jesus cannot even remain in his beloved town because of the threats he receives. We as North Americans don't tend to stick to one place but in Jesus' culture and time "home is where you are born; and home is where you die. The span between birth and death is often spent in familiar village or countryside settings, raising a family, plying a trade, and working the fields. The land itself is home – and it does not change all that much from one generation to the next... In the ancient world, the gift of land from king or ruler was itself the gift of home – of identity and belonging. It was certainly so for the ancient Israelites, who traced their ultimate origins to Abram's epic journey from a place far away, to the land which the Lord promised to give him. "I am the Lord who brought you from Ur of the Chaldeans," the Lord tells Abram in our first reading today, "to give you this land to possess." In taking possession of the land and inhabiting it,...Abraham – and his descendants become the Lord's own people.

Jesus treads this same land centuries later, “casting out demons and performing cures.” He makes his way from his home in Nazareth – where he is rejected by his own townspeople – to the holy city of Jerusalem. In some sense, his passage serves to remind us of Abram’s journey centuries before. But the land promised to those who will heed Jesus’ voice does not consist of acres and square footage but of the very kingdom of heaven.”

The deep journey of life does not come easy. Ask any athlete who has won a medal in the last 14 days if the training and the crashes were easy. Ask them if they did it all on their own. Ask them if all they received was support from everyone they encountered.

The journey to the abundant life will require courage, spirit, sacrifice and hard work. There will be Herods along the way but the purpose of this lenten time is to help us stop and refocus our lives. To open our eyes to see we are not alone on the journey no matter how hard it may seem. In today’s gospel Jesus laments the fear of Jerusalem. He longs for them to know protection, courage and life abundance.

Jesus expresses his grief over Jerusalem as a prophet-persecuting city? And then he leaves us with an unforgettable tender and surprising image. "How often have I desired to gather your children together as a hen gathers her brood under her wings, and you were not willing!"

Jesus longs for us to know the comfort of the holy just as a mother hen, eager for her little chicks to find shelter beneath her soft, comforting wings. This does not describe the warrior-king many people are waiting for. Yet this is how Jesus presents himself, in a time when people need to know peace and comfort overall.

Whatever your struggle, your lament, your pain or even your joy - The holy longs for you to know peace and comfort under sheltering wings. Allow this lenten season to be a season of new life, a season of knowing the holy is with you in the journey of life.

May God’s sheltering wings, her gathering wings protect you and hold you in her love.

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