

The Worries of the Wild:

Faith in the Midst of Chaos and Monotony

Adventure Series: Faith

Advent Week 2 - Dec 5th, 2021

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Psalm 32

Esther 4: 1-8

James 3: 13-18

Luke 12: 22-32

In today's readings we witnessed our friend, Esther, receive what was most likely the worst news of her life. Not only were her friends and family in danger but her entire race sat with their heads on the chopping block. Her own neck would have been on the list too.

I love that passage in Luke: "How much more precious are we?"^{124b} We see so clearly how God cares for His critters, but for some reason, it escapes us to notice His hands working so busily in our own lives. I think it is because we run around trying everything we can to fix the situation and to better our lives that we seem to overlook the fact that none of our efforts were the ones that worked. It was His doing. Even the sparrow can tell to whom belongs the hand that seeds him. God takes care of even the tiniest detail of that bird's life, and ours. The difference is that the song that bird sings is one of thanks and praise.

Esther is such an example of one who God takes care of. Her people were set for destruction, to be completely wiped out, technically she would have been on the list too. It was known not to approach the king. It was known not to ask for a favour. Yet this Queen stood before him, brave and true, and asked for the lives of her people. She must have

been petrified to ask, but she knew that she had to and she trusted that God would see her through, one way or another.

Today, we saw Mordecai distraught over the fate of the Jews, and Esther receive the news. Mordecai instructed her, knowing she had been raised by God to a position of influence just in time to help her people. And seemingly without question, she will continue on to be the instrument through which God saves His people, again. This could not have happened if she didn't trust Him, and worried so much that she lost the courage to face the King.

God takes care of His children. We don't have to be perfect. We just have to trust Him and let go of everything else. We call that faith. In Psalm 32, we are reminded that a clean heart is found through confessing our sins to Him, not by never having sinned. No one expects that of you. "I confessed my rebellion to the Lord. And you forgave me! All my guilt is gone."^{5b} "Oh, what joy for those whose disobedience is forgiven, whose sin is put out of sight! Yes, what joy for those whose record the Lord has cleared of guilt, whose lives are lived in complete honesty!"¹⁻² Unlike the simple creatures, we cannot just exist without ever having sinned, at least a little bit, we have inherited sin with the fall. It is a fact, a sad one, but a fact nonetheless. All we have to do is confess - hand it over to the Lord. I know that it sounds simple, but we all know that putting our deepest, darkest secrets into words and sharing them can be a terrifying experience, and can, more often than not, be more than enough to turn us away. But that is the wonderful thing about a personal, living relationship with God: He already knows. He accepts and loves us anyways. To be honest, I have more of those "OK, you know what I want to say..." or "You know what's in my heart..." sort of prayers than the ones where I try to figure out the perfect words - or any words at all in some cases. Sometimes that is enough.

But the trickiest part for me? After I have given it over to God, I sometimes have a lot of trouble letting go of it. But that is essentially 'Trust'. Giving something totally and completely to God. How can He take care of me as completely as He does that little sparrow if I keep trying to do it all myself? Well, He can't, not without betraying my free

will. And though sometimes letting go is a bit like that bird's first flying lesson, it is the overwhelming act of jumping off the nest that is the only way that a bird can fly. God will provide even the wind to lift your wings.

That is one of the bits that I wear. That constant reminder that literally and forcefully turns my head. Try to trust. Let it go. It is hard, but we long for a day when it comes naturally to follow His guidance. So we don't need bit and bridle forcing us to obey, or constant reminders of His will for us.

"Unfailing love surrounds those who trust the Lord."^{10b} How could you worry surrounded by unfailing love?!?

Today's passage from James speaks of two types of wisdom. We should be warned of the first but concern ourselves only with the second. The first is on earthly wisdom that breeds disorder. The second is the wisdom that comes with being a child of God. It is all of the things that we as Christians long to be: "pure; peace-loving, considerate, submissive, full of mercy and good fruit, impartial and sincere."^{3:17} Imagine living a life that is guided by such wisdom...

To be a child of God is to live like a little lamb in the Shepherd's care or the sparrow who flies on the very breath of God. No worries. No cares. Just honesty and peace.

I have never seen an animal show remorse. They never seem to ask "What will I do when that happens again?"; "What can I do to stop that from happening again?"; "What am I going to do?"; "When's it going to happen again?"... We spend so much time planning the avoidance of life, that we forget to relax and enjoy the living of it. And the only way to relax and enjoy anything? To trust that there is nothing else that we need to do. God will take care of us. But we need to just trust and give Him the chance. A.K.A. Stop interfering!

Have you ever noticed that every time we try to take matters into our own hands things tend to get all muddled up? That is because when we try to take care of things on our own, we are pushing God out of our lives. We are not including Him.

God wanted so much to be with us that He actually come down and joined our herd. We have all heard that God is the Good Shepherd and we are His sheep. What I think a lot of us forget was that He was also The Lamb. He wanted so much for us to be with Him, and to be a part of our lives, that He come down and joined us for a while. And like wolves in sheep's clothing, we devoured Him. But even for that, He forgave us.

Like simple little sheep, we follow each other anywhere. We know His voice like a lamb knows its Shepherd's voice, but again, even God's most simple critters have mastered something that we "advanced" humans can't seem to grasp: A sheep knows the shepherd's voice *and* follows it. They know that He will protect them, He will feed them, and He will find shelter for them. And because they know this, they will follow His voice, even in the night. And like a good shepherd, if even one lamb goes astray, He sets out in search of them, to bring them home. "How much more precious are we?"

How is that a little lamb, still wet behind the ears, knows to trust the Shepherd, but through 60+ years of life, most people still haven't figured it out, yet. We know the Shepherd's voice, we know what He wants from us, yet we still walk the other way. We hear Him calling in the night, and still, we don't listen.

A true friend is one that you can tell anything to. A friend who will be there at your side when you are at your lowest. A friend who will stay behind, get caught, even take the punishment for something that you did so that you can make it home safely. A friend who will always bail you out of whatever mess you can get yourself into. Christ paid that price: you are set free. Christ, the Lamb of God, endured the punishment for every mess you get yourself into so that can come home safely to His father's house. Like a true friend, He paid our bail. What a friend we have in Jesus! He already did the hardest part, he paid our bail with his 'life savings'. So why is it so hard for us to hold up our end of the bargain? All we have to do is ... nothing. Stop trying to do everything ourselves. Stop trying to fix everything. Stop worrying.

Every one of God's critters reacts to their surroundings. But if there is no threat, they put their heads back down in the grass and just enjoy the dinner that He provided.

They eat what they see, but they don't worry about where their next meal is coming from. If a storm wrecks their home: Great, something to do, rebuild!

Even a bird with a broken wing doesn't need to worry. They cry, they pull themselves together, and they waddle off to a safe place to wait. What are they waiting for? Healing. That little bug over there to come just close enough to volunteer itself for dinner. How about that. Even a critter who can no longer fend for themselves has dinner provided for them on a silver platter. They sit there and they wait until they are strong enough and then... they fly away. Their flight is the bird's way of dancing before the Lord with all their might. Their song is the most beautiful praise the heavens can hear. But if that bird had sat there and worried about what to do next, then God couldn't have fixed the little broken wing and He would have missed that beautiful song.

My favourite analogy for faith life is that of a new puppy. The new puppy who doesn't know the rules and constantly chews things they shouldn't, makes messes in the house, and eats every new pair of shoes you get. That same puppy that you spend more time reprimanding than playing with. And even though you are so angry you could spit when they run away, you can do nothing but love and scratch them and say 'Welcome home,' just because you are so happy to see them again that you forget about how much money they ate, how many hours you spend down on your hands and knees cleaning up after them, and how much hair you sweep up off the floor on what feels like a daily basis. All the way until they are your faithful old friend and all you can remember about when they were a puppy is how much fun you had playing with them and how cute and fuzzy they were. I don't know if it's because I am a dog owner and I hope that one day my dog will be a well-behaved faith-full friend or because I am a struggling Christian who wishes so much that to one day get it right, even just for a little while. I long to hear those most precious words... 'good girl' and, receive that coveted pat on the head.

To one day be that good and faith-full servant who needs no reminding and knows when to bring the slippers, when to play and when to just stay out of the way. I think that the goal of every Christian is to be in that day when they no longer need that bit and

bridle to force them to do what their master wants. To be so in-tune with the Shepherd that they know what He wants of them. That day when it is so natural to just do what is right in His eyes that we no longer worry.

The difference between trust and faith is that trust is earned and faith is given. It's like that open door that invites you into your potential. You have faith in God before anything is proven. You have faith that you will be taken care of and that He will live up to His promises, and also His character as it was revealed through the prophets and anecdotal records of the Bible.

When we trust another human being what we are doing is believing what they've told us and hoping that they will come through. When we have faith in another human being then we are inviting them in to the fulfilment of that invitation, no matter what they believe about themselves. Faith is about believing beyond proof, before proof, even before opportunity to prove yourself. We must have faith both in God to support us, but also in ourselves to live up to His challenges and invitations.

So, what are the worries of the wild?

There aren't any, they know better. And we're supposed to be the smart one's. My prayer for today is that I will see a little sparrow fly away, and with him will go all my worries.

Benediction:

Lamb of God, who takes away the sins of the world;

Lion of God, freer of souls,

The heavens and the earth glorify you.

Hear the prayers of your people and help us

to understand and accept Your Will.

Help us to get past our trials,

Help us to let go of them

but not forget the lessons learned along the journey.

Help us to become someone that you would be proud to call your child.

Eternal Lord God.

Help us to recognize Your voice as Your lambs

and give us the strength to trust You

and follow You, our Shepherd.

Remember us...

Forgive us...

'Now all glory to God, who is able to keep you from falling away and will bring you with great into His glorious presence without a single fault. All glory to Him who alone is God, our Saviour through Jesus Christ our Lord. All glory, majesty, power, and authority are His before all time, and in the present, and beyond all time! In the name of the Father, the Son, and the Holy Spirit. Amen.'

~ Jude 24-25

Soli Deo Gloria,
Rev. Rynn Parraw