

My Treasured Possession

3rd Sun. after Pentecost – 06/18/23 – Mt. Calvary Luth.

Text: Exodus 19:2-8 Pastor Keith Besel

vv. 4-6 [Yahweh's message to His people,] **“You yourselves have seen what I did to the Egyptians, and how I bore you on eagles' wings and brought you to Myself. Now therefore, if you will indeed obey My voice and keep My covenant, you shall be My treasured possession among all peoples, for all the earth is mine; and you shall be to Me a kingdom of priests and a holy nation.”**

Introduction

- ✘ A widower was searching through old photo albums in his attic for his favorite picture of his wife. Working through all of the albums, he became lost in a sea of memories. But then he came across a journal that belonged to his son Jimmy. He didn't remember his son ever keeping a journal.
 - ➔ As he read the journal of his then 6-year-old son, he noticed that he was remembering things in a new and fresh way.
 - ➔ He recalled that he had kept his own business journal during those same years. So he rushed to his office for his old journal. Looking through it, the entry for June 4th grabbed his attention.
 - ➔ His own entry said, “Wasted the whole day fishing with Jimmy. Didn't catch a thing.” With a deep sigh, he turned to Jimmy's journal, found June 4th and read the large scrawling letters pressed deeply into the paper: “Went fishing with dad. Best day of my life!” (quoted in “The Dash” by Linda Ellis and Mac Anderson, pp. 82-84.)
- ✘ Friends, when our children are able to receive the undivided attention of their father, it's a big deal! And often it's the kind of thing that makes memories.
 - ➔ Well guess what, you could say that what we have in today's text from Holy Scripture is a “journal” account; a picture of our Father – God in our own “family album”!
 - ➔ And although it happened long before any of us were a part of the family, some 3400 years ago, it records an event that deeply affects our personal and family relationships with the very same Father still today. And it is a big deal!
- ✘ We call this family journal “God's Word”. And it tells us that our ancestors were in serious need of their Father's undivided attention. But in their case it wasn't the Father who had become distracted as it so often happens today. No, this time it was the children who needed to adjust their focus.
 - ➔ So verse four tells us that the Father “brought [them]” out of Egypt “to [Himself]”; out into the wilderness. And this was a real wilderness; a desert, so that God could entirely separate His children from their ordinary surroundings and distractions; so He could really get their attention.
 - ➔ Just imagine what kind of place today would make it possible for a Father and child to get each other's undivided attention. It'd have to be a place with no TV, no cell phones, no earbuds, no computer or tablet screens of any kind. It would mean no pillows to sleep on; no bedrooms or Starbucks to hide in – a real “wilderness”; a place totally set apart from the trappings of our daily lives and our self-absorbed society so that we could truly focus on our time with each other.
- ✘ God used Moses to lead His children to the wilderness of Mt. Sinai; His Holy Mountain. And today, our Father brought us all here, into His Holy Sanctuary; a place that is in fact “set apart” specifically for “Father-and-son” / “Father-and-daughter” time.

→ It's true, this place and this time is "the best day"; "the best time of our lives" because it's right here and right now that you and I get time alone with our Father; that we also get "family time" apart from our worldly distractions.

I. "I have done this for you"

✘ And today we have the joy of looking back at a section of our Father's journal; at a page of our family album where we see the picture and we hear the words of our "doting Father."

→ I'd like to believe that we all agree as to what that word "doting" means. But an unofficial survey that I took a while back proved that I was wrong. So let's clear that up.

→ The dictionaries say that "to dote" is to "act foolishly"; to be "excessively or foolishly fond"; to be "extravagantly or foolishly loving and indulgent" with someone else. (various references in *dictionary.com*)

✘ Those descriptions fit well with parents, grandparents and family, don't they? We're all guilty of and/or familiar with those who brag about and "love on" their children with complete foolishness and extravagance.

→ It doesn't matter how snotty, naughty and irritating the child really is, parents and family still love him without exception; still shower her with affection; still bail him out of trouble.

✘ Well guess what, you and I are truly blessed to have a "doting Father" in our God who loves us with an unfailing and a "foolish" love. Scripture even uses that word with God in 1 Corinthians 1:25 when it says, "the foolishness of God is wiser than men, and the weakness of God is stronger than men."

→ In His foolish love, God continued to love us, as our Epistle Reading in Romans (5:6-15) says today. He loved us even when we were "still weak", poor miserable "sinners" and "enemies of God"; even then, He sent His only-begotten Son to "die for us" and "reconcile to Himself all things" (Col. 1:20), making things right between us as Father and child.

✘ And the entry before us in the Father's journal today shows that our Father doted on His children 3400 years ago, just as He does on you and me today, for His is a foolish and saving love for us all.

→ He told Moses, one of His first pastors, "tell the people of Israel" these things. In other words, come, sit up on my lap, open up the album and the journal so that we can remember our best times ever!

✘ Remember how you saw with your very own eyes what I did to the Egyptians who held you in slavery:

→ How I showed My power in the 10 plagues – the Nile turning into blood, the locusts, the fiery hail, the angel of death that passed over your houses — and why? Because you are My children and I love you!

→ Remember how I brought you out of that slavery, how I divided the Red Sea so that you could escape Pharaoh's army and how I destroyed them all by closing it up on top of them.

→ Remember how I provided your daily bread as I brought you here to My Holy Mountain – the water from the rock, the manna every day, the quail.

→ Like any loving father, all that you needed, I have provided for you – even when you complained and whined in your selfishness and discontent.

✘ Yes, our Father says in verse four, remember "how I bore you on eagle's wings and brought you to Myself."

- That image is one of my favorites among all of the pictures in Holy Scripture because it presents the image of a loving and caring parent; of an Eagle watching over its young as it leaves the nest for the first time. You see, the parent flies for a time underneath its young, bearing it up on its own wings to protect it and break any potential fall.
- ⊗ And this is only one of the countless pictures in our family album; in the Bible, of how our Father has saved us purely by His grace!
 - Look again at verse four, He says nothing about His children doing anything on their own to come to Him. He is very clear, I “brought you to Myself”.
- ⊗ And it’s the same for you and me still today. Our doting Father has carried us on the wings of His Word and Sacrament; bringing us to Himself in the water and word of our baptism; feeding us with the very body and blood of Jesus that was shed on the cross for our forgiveness and our salvation!
 - And we deserve none of it! Yet He has done it all in the wisdom of His foolish love!

II. “You are my...”

- ⊗ And now in verses five and six He’s not done doting on us. He brags about our identity as His children.
 - You all know how your “family name” is a great source of pride right? Father’s especially seek to instill that honor and pride in their children — “son or daughter, you’re (a Kirschenman, a Deepe, a Haiar, a Seltzer...) and that’s something to be proud of.”
 - Yet the child does nothing to earn or acquire the name. It’s simply given by the father at birth and it’s done.
- ⊗ One time some children were waiting for the school bus and their conversation turned to the money they had in their pockets.
 - The first child bragged as he held out his change, “I have 20 cents.” The second could top that: “I have 30 cents.”
 - One boy claimed he had 50 cents but couldn’t show it to them. So the group teased, “You don’t have 50 cents. If you do, then show it to us.” But the boy was firm, “My daddy said that when I get home from school today he’s gonna give me 50 cents. So it’s already mine ‘cause my daddy said so.”
- ⊗ The children of Israel, have a promise from their “Daddy” in verses five and six. “You shall be My treasured possession among all the peoples, for all the earth is Mine; and you shall be to Me a kingdom of priests and a holy nation.” Those are the promises of our Father; God, so we know that they are fact, ‘cause our Daddy said so!
 - In fact, this is the fulfillment of the covenant God first made with Adam and Eve in the Garden, then to Abraham, continuing through all of the prophets up until Jesus. It’s the promised result of God’s foolish love shown in what Paul calls the “foolishness of the cross” in 1 Corinthians 1:18; the fact that His death actually saves us all!
- ⊗ It was promised thousands of years in advance, but because our Father said it, it was completely true the moment He said it – and it is absolutely true still today.
 - So you and I, dear Christians are the Father’s “treasured possession” – His “segullah” (סְגֻלָּה) as the Hebrew puts it. This “segullah” is much more than just general property. This is a person’s most valuable possession, something that he saves; that he put’s aside and even displays as a source of great pride.

- Here the Father says that, out of all of His Creation; out of all the nations and people on earth; He chose Israel to be His “segullah”.
- ✘ And Romans 9 along with Ephesians 3 tells us that you and I today are the children of Israel, “partakers of the promise in Christ Jesus through the Gospel” (Eph. 3:6).
 - So rejoice my dear people, because you and I are the Father’s “segullah”; His treasured possession, not because of anything of value in ourselves – but because our value comes from the one to whom we belong – our Father!
- ✘ 1 Peter 2:9, tells us what this means for us in our lives, “You are a chosen race, a royal priesthood, a holy nation, a people for His own possession, that you may proclaim the excellencies of Him who called you out of darkness into His marvelous light.”
 - Now a “priest” is a mediator, a go-between – one who represents someone else and speaks on His behalf. God gave Moses to the people of Israel just as He gives pastors to His people today, to be priests in the public realm.
 - But here’s what’s really cool, friends: today’s text and the one I just read from 1 Peter is very clear that our family name is “Christian”. And as a Christian we are honored to have a very specific, family task. We are to be a “kingdom of priests”. For what purpose? Peter says, “to proclaim the excellencies of Him who called you out of darkness into His marvelous light.”
- ✘ That’s our calling; our life’s vocation as the Father’s “segullah”. We are all gifted in this world to be missionaries; to bring honor to the family name and to bring others into the family by proclaiming our Father’s foolish love in the death and resurrection of Jesus Christ!

Conclusion (“Yes Father we will...”)

- ✘ Our family ancestors before us in our text were all united in their conviction. They said, “All that the Lord has spoken we will do” (v. 8). In fact, it says they “answered together”. They were family; they walked together as “treasured possessions”; as “proclaimers”.
 - Moses told the people what God wanted them to know and do. Today you’ve heard the same from me as we’ve reviewed our Father’s “journal entry”.
- ✘ So now you know that your Father brought you here to this place today; to Himself by His grace!
 - Because of that, I ask you, Do you believe that because of Jesus you are His “treasured possession”? (Get a response.)
 - Do you believe that He has made you His royal priests to proclaim His Gospel? (Get a response.)
 - So all that the Lord has spoken, by His power and with His help, will you do it? (Get a response.)
- ✘ May it be so for Jesus sake and by His grace! Amen.