

Unfettered Love

9th Sun. after Pent. – 07/26/26 – Mt. Calvary Luth.

Text: Deuteronomy 7:6-9, Pastor Keith Besel

vv. 7-8, [Moses tells the people of Israel,] **“It was not because you were more in number than any other people, that Yahweh set His love on you and chose you,... but it is because Yahweh loves you and is keeping the oath that He swore to your fathers, that Yahweh has brought you out with a mighty hand and redeemed you from the house of slavery....”**

Introduction

- ✧ The same basic storyline has been written and rewritten again and again, in songs; in plays and in movies. Whether it's *Romeo and Juliet* or Noah and Allie in the classic chick-flick movie *The Notebook*, most of us know the story. Someone falls for a woman/man that she/he is simply not allowed to love.
 - ➔ The beloved comes from “the wrong family” or “the wrong side of the tracks” or “the wrong race.” In fact, all too often it ends tragically; a love that simply cannot be.
- ✧ It's the same plot line that we find throughout Holy Scripture, including here in our Old Testament Reading today. Israel's God; our God, has chosen as His beloved an entire race – the human race; a people who simply cannot be loved.
 - ➔ When you look at this race of which we are all a part honestly, there's really nothing...nothing to love about any of us; no impressive family name; no reputation...except for a really a bad one. And nothing personal – that is, nothing attached to our personal value or attributes that would warrant any of us to be lovable.
- ✧ If God was living under a set of parents who were concerned about His future, they would tell Him to dump us all and look somewhere else.
 - ➔ But thankfully, God didn't do that! He chose the people of Israel when they were nothing; insignificant and honestly untrustworthy.
 - ➔ And He has chosen us – you and me as well; chosen us to love! What is perhaps the most amazing thing of all is that His love – God's love for us won't be bound by tradition; convention; or the expectations of anyone else. His love, my dear friends and fellow sinners, won't even be thwarted by our constant and repeated unfaithfulness.
 - ➔ No, the unfettered love of God in His Son, Jesus has entirely overcome our rebellion; our idolatry; and our unbelief.

I. God has Called Us to be Special (v. 6).

- ✧ The people that God called in our Old Testament Reading were certainly not a very special people according to outward appearances or earthly standards. In fact they were a “fettered” nation. To be “fettered” is to be “bound or restrained” either physically by chains or some other confining device, or by social constraints like slavery, status, oppression or psychological abuse.
 - ➔ The people of Israel unfortunately were fettered in all of those ways; a nation of slaves under the most powerful ruler of their day – the mighty Pharaoh of Egypt. They still existed for only one purpose – to build Pharaoh's kingdom, one back-breaking, baked brick or chiseled stone at a time. They were the lowest of the low on the social ladder; starved; whipped and beaten by their taskmasters; oppressed and worthless in the eyes of the entire world.
- ✧ And yet, the one entity that was more powerful than Pharaoh, the one and only true God; Yahweh; the Creator of the entire universe, inexplicably chose this downtrodden nation, as Moses reminds them in verse six to be “a people holy to Yahweh your God.”

- ➔ “Out of all the peoples who are on the face of the earth”, Moses says, “Yahweh your God has chosen you to be a people for His treasured possession!” (v.6)
- ✘ Wow! How remarkable is that? Exclusively by His unbounded love for these common slaves; this nation that was just a bunch of “nobodies” according to the world, God did with them exactly what the word “holy” means. He “set them apart”; He made them so special that He worked miracle after miracle to try and convince Pharaoh to let them go. And when Pharaoh hardened his heart toward God, Yahweh divided the Red Sea and He brought His people out of slavery with a mighty hand.
- ➔ And when they still disobeyed; creating a golden calf to worship, He showed His unbound love to them by disciplining them, yet never wavering in His love for them. He gave them His Commandments; His guides for living as His people saying, “You shall have no other gods before Me” (Deut. 5:7) and telling them what it looks like to be His holy people: “You shall love Yahweh your God with all your heart and with all your soul and with all your might” (Deut. 6:5).
- ✘ Why did God call for such commitment? Because these people were “the apple of [His] eye” as David later wrote in Psalm 17:8. They truly were “His treasured possession (v.6);” the very object of His boundless, undeserved love.
- ➔ Yet they failed to recognize and take God’s love as seriously as they should. They allowed themselves selfishly to think that God did not care for them all the way across the wilderness for 40 years; complaining that they were hungry, though God provided bread every morning and quail every night; complaining that they were thirsty, though God – more than once, brought water to them out of a rock.
- ➔ God told them as they were entering into His Promised Land, not to make covenants with the unbelieving nations already there. He warned them not to let their carnal desires take over and lust after or intermarry with those who did not have Yahweh as their God. They were to remain “holy”; set apart among the nations as His and His alone.
- ➔ But they did not. They let their passions take over so that they closed their eyes and ears to God; following the ways of the world and the desires of their earthly hearts instead.
- ✘ Yet before you and I get all high and mighty toward these folks, we need to turn the mirror on ourselves don’t we? Because we too have failed to see and hear the true depth of God’s love for us; we too have followed our passions and desires, even though we might gather here to worship God in this place.
- ➔ Just ask yourself, honestly, “What about the rest of the time; when I’m at home, or with my friends, or busy out in the world?” Just ask, “Would I ever feel uncomfortable if God was physically standing beside me every moment of every day; if He actually heard every word that comes out of my mouth, or every thought that goes through my head?”
- ➔ Well, remember, He is God. He is at your side 24/7, 365 days a year! He has heard every word and thought that you’ve ever said or considered!
- ✘ And still, He has not turned His back on you. He has called you and me by the Gospel, and He has made us His own beloved children in His Son Jesus.
- ➔ He has opened our eyes and ears in His gift of faith to see Him with us in our baptism; to hear His word of truth and His declaration of unfettered love as your Pastor declares His Word; as you read that same perfect Word in your daily devotions or as it comes from the mouths of fellow believers in Christ.
- ➔ And it is in that Word, that you and I have received the promise and the declaration that Jesus, in His death on the cross to pay for our guilt, and in His resurrection from death three

days later, has overcome our rebellion and sin once and for all! As Paul says in our Epistle Reading today, even in the mist of all of our suffering and struggles with sin, “in all these things we are more than conquerors through Him (Jesus) who loved us” (Rom. 8:37).

- ✘ So, my dear Christians, in the faith of that saving Gospel, look to Jesus and listen to His Word every day and believe it with all of “all your heart and with all your soul and with all your might” (Deut. 6:5).

II. God has called us by His unfettered love (vv. 7–8).

- ✘ For just as there was nothing special about Israel; nothing great; nothing worthy of the Lord setting His love upon them, the same is true for all of us.

➔ And yet, that’s the beauty of God’s unfettered and free love. Martin Luther said, “The love of God does not find, but creates, that which is pleasing to it” (*Luther’s Works* AE 31:41). That’s what He has done within sinful souls from the very beginning, right up to us today. He promised the people at the time of our text that, the blood of the Passover Lamb would save them from the angel of death which they all deserved to receive. And then, through the promise of that blood that pointed Israel in faith to His coming Messiah, God cleansed and “created” out of nothing His holy people.

- ✘ Yes, God’s love is free, and yet He has bound it to His word of promise throughout all the generations of mankind. First He gave the promise to Abraham, passing it on through the prophets and attaching physical illustrations like the Tabernacle and Temple; like the Passover Lamb; like the manna and quail; like the rock in the wilderness – all of them pointing to His one and only Son who fulfilled every promise and illustration throughout history in His death and resurrection.

➔ And now in that Good News of Jesus you and I hear the proclamation of God’s unconditioned love toward us as His free invitation; as His unfettered offer of forgiveness and salvation; as the only power that can break the fetters of our sin and guilt by covering us with Jesus’ blood and “creating in [us] a clean heart...and renewing a right spirit within [us]” (Ps. 51:10) so that we truly are His holy people; His treasured possession.

➔ As verse eight says, “because Yahweh loves you ... [He] has brought you out with a mighty hand and redeemed you from the house of slavery....” Today Jesus redeems you and me from the oppressive slavery of our guilt and our sin.

III. God called us to live in His unfettered love (v. 9).

- ✘ And now as His holy and treasured people and possession, verse nine identifies three ways that God’s unfettered love influences and impacts the way that we live here among the people in our own unique corner of His “Promised Land” today.

➔ Just as the people of Israel were about to live among the many pagan and unbelieving nations as God’s “holy people”, so you and I are surrounded and tempted by those around us to worship ourselves and things and others as idols; to spurn and despise God’s love as something that is only a myth; something that our parents might have believed is real, but now we doubt it. At the very least, the busyness of our schedules and pressures of our own over-commitment to other things has lulled us into taking God’s love and call into His service for granted. Don’t think so? Just look at how easy it is to come up with a reason why it’s okay to watch those shows you know God is not okay with, or to miss Sunday worship or skip out on Bible Study and Sunday School; or how easy it is to explain why God doesn’t actually want you to love that unlovable neighbor or talk with that grouchy co-worker about your faith or speak out about the truth when others are expecting you to fall in line with what is false.

✧ What does God actually expect of you and me now as His treasured possession and holy people? First of all in verse nine, “Know therefore that Yahweh Your God is God....” To “know” in the original Hebrew is not only to have the knowledge of who the one and only God is, but it is to have the wisdom to apply that truth into every aspect and corner of your life; to be unwavering in holding to Yahweh in thick and thin; in the joys and in the sorrows of life.

➔ Second, is to know that our God, Yahweh, is “the faithful God who keeps (His) covenant....” This means that even when the challenges and situations in life might tempt me to question whether God really does love me; really does consider me to be His treasured possession, I know that He cannot go against His character, but He must, and He always does fulfill every promise that He has made!

➔ And finally, number three, our God’s love is a “steadfast love with those who love Him and keep His commands, to a thousand generations.” The evidence of this love for us is shown most obviously in God’s Son, Jesus. As God-in-the-flesh, Jesus lived out His unfettered love by freely enduring the suffering and shame and torture of the cross in our place; by bearing the punishment and curse that should have been ours instead.

Conclusion

✧ Why? because of His love for you...and me...and all of mankind. It’s in that expression of unfettered love that Jesus has cleansed us and made us new. And it wasn’t that He just “restored” us. No, He “re-created” us because there was nothing in us worth keeping; nothing expect for the love that He has had for us from the beginning of time.

➔ This, my beloved people, is the “steadfast”, unfettered and free love of your God and Savior; the love that holds you and me forever; into eternity, in the arms of Jesus. For “nothing,” Paul says in Romans 8:39 (bulletin cover), “will be able to separate us from the love of God in Christ Jesus.” Amen.