

## **God Never Forsake**

When the Word became flesh, Jesus took on human nature and he shared all the emotions as human could experiences in our lives. Jesus rejoiced, as later on in the book of Luke it says, “Rejoice with me, for I have found my sheep which was lost (Luke 15:5-6)”; Jesus felt compassion, in Mark 6:34 it says, “When Jesus landed and saw a large crowd, he had compassion on them, because they were like sheep without a shepherd. So he began teaching them many things;” Jesus was troubled, and he was in a great temptation during the forty days in the wilderness (Luke 4:1-13); Jesus felt angry, disappointed, sorrow, and grief; he also greatly desired, and he loved.

In today’s scripture, Jesus sorrowed and lamented for the city of Jerusalem. While I was preparing the sermon, I prayed and I was crying. I couldn’t imagine how hard it was for Jesus to predict the future disaster of Jerusalem? And how deeply it hurts Jesus’s heart?

In the text, Jesus used an image of mother hen to describe his love for his people. **As how much the mother hen loves her children; Jesus loves his people deeply with his whole heart.** “Jerusalem, Jerusalem, the city that kills the prophets and stones those who are sent to it! How often have I desired to gather your children together as a hen gathers her brood under her wings, and you were NOT willing! (Luke 13:34)”

God sent out prophets after prophets, the calling for repentance and the warning for the destruction of Jerusalem repeated years after years. **But the message never changed people’s mind.** Those words are heavy, harsh, and uncomfortable. Those words are like sharp weapons that stab into their hearts. Those words turned them from “refuse and deny” to “hate and murder.”

Jesus’s heart was broken not only for the stiff-necked people, but also for what was coming for them. As verse 35 says, “See, your house is left to you. And I tell you, you will not see me until the time comes when you say, ‘Blessed is the one who comes in the name of the Lord.’” Jesus wished that those people could speak out the words that “Blessed is the one who comes in the name of the Lord”

right now, so that the disaster would not come to his people. **He predicted the future with deep lament, yet also with the hope that the last minutes call would work.**

I believe many of us are familiar with the term “last call” at bars. At least this is how I learned this English word. The most impressive last call experience for me was nothing about drinks.

Every year, I would go back to China to see my families and friends. Since there is no direct flight from Minnesota to China, I have to transfer at least once (Delta proposes a first nonstop flight from Minnesota to China begin in 2020). There was one time I transferred in Seattle, and the transit time was about one and half hours. But somehow I thought it was two and half-hours. So I decided to buy a good meal, I set down and I watched a movie. I set an alarm, but obviously I set up the wrong time.

While I was enjoying the food and movie, someone came to me and patted me on the shoulder, and she said, “I think they are calling you.” Then I suddenly realized that the broadcast was repeating my name, “This is the last call for passenger Linqing Chu.” I was so glad that the person interrupted me, although I still didn’t know how she figured out the broadcast was calling me.

But what if nobody had interrupted me and I had not heard the last call and the flight took off without me? The consequence of my mistake would have been missing the flight. But compared with missing a flight, the people of Jerusalem experienced a much more serious consequence, they lost their home.

You may be wondering am I going to the direction of sin and consequence? But don't worry I won't go there. **The message that speaks to me today is not the consequence of sins, but it is God's love and protection never forsakes us just like the wings of mother hen will never leave her children.**

Jesus predicted the destruction of Jerusalem, and according to the history, this prediction did come true. However, this was not the end of the story, God's promise of rebuilt the city also come true. **Just like the wings of mother hen,**

**the wings of God's love and protection never forsake the people of Jerusalem.**

In the Genesis story, the Lord predicted the slavery of Israelites, but the story never ends with oppression and slavery, God promised Abram that one day "they shall come out with great possessions and come back to this promised land (Genesis 15:14-16)" **Just like the wings of mother hen, the wings of God's love and protection never forsake God's people.**

We know the promise of love and protection is always here, but how about the time between "lament" and "rebuilt"? How about the time between "slavery" and "Promised Land"? The time of waiting and wondering is also real. **I think the waiting time is when we could repent and listen to God's call.** Just as mother hen gathers her children under her wings, **we gathered as a church under God's love to response God's call.**

As I read these verses again and again, I keep asking myself, "How many times had God called me to repent? How many times have I refuse to response the call? What are the calls? Is it my relationship with God? Is it my prayer? Is it an open heart to strangers? Is it the listening ears for people who don't agree with me? Is it the patience for my boyfriend? Is it an action for people who are in need? Is it a strongly hold of my faith?" I couldn't count how many times I have said yes or no to God's call. **But one thing I'm sure is that the wings of God's love and protection never forsake me.**

On last Friday, March 8<sup>th</sup>. One of our long time members Eleanor Edstrom passed away at the ago of 104. God's love never forsakes her. She was, she is, and she will be loved by her people.

Eleanor's daughter describes her mother as a person who has passion on fishing. During Eleanor's 103<sup>rd</sup> birthday, her daughter took her up to the North and she went fishing. She loved her family, and she was blessed by three great grand daughters - Eleanor, Abby, and Maddie. She loved baking and she would always have a delicious and sweet treat when people came to her house.

She also had a long history with church and many dear friends from Hope. She belonged to the Gloria circle and served many events with the group. She was also in the quilting group and helped to donate many quilts to people in need. A memorial service for her is planed on May 14<sup>th</sup> at Hope.

When members of our congregation die, we remember how the waters that first washed over them in baptism, hold them now in death. I will come down to the baptismal font and we will pray for her together.

*Let us pray:* Holy God, holy and powerful, we remember before you today our sister Eleanor Edstrom. We thank you for giving her to us to know and to love as a dear sister in our journey on earth. At these waters of baptism, you welcomed her into your loved wings. At these waters, you comforted her in times of trouble and encouraged her in delight. At these waters, you now enfold her into Jesus' death and resurrection and the promise of life everlasting. Comfort us who mourn and bring us together to feast with all the saints of God. In Jesus' name we pray. Amen!