Living a Christian Life…Believing
Psalm 27; Luke 13:31-35
February 28, 2010

The enemy of my enemy is my friend. Ask any Green Bay Packer fan who cheered for **the New Orleans Saints simply because Bret Favre and the Minnesota** Vikings had a chance at the Super Bowl this year and they will tell you so. Those who are opposed to the people I am opposed to are my friend. In theory, at least.

In looking at today's gospel lesson we find the Pharisees, the very ones who would deliver Jesus to Pilot, warning him to flee because Herod was seeking to kill him. Although they were no supporter of Jesus and his **ministry, the Pharisees liked Herod even less.** Both Jesus and the Pharisees were Jewish and to the Jewish people, Herod was an enemy. He was responsible for oppressive taxation and he was resented as the over bearing and erratic foreign government agent. "**If Herod wants to kill you because you are a problem** to him, then the Pharisees want to keep you alive because they want Herod to have as many problems as possible."[1] For the Pharisees it was not really about saving the life of Jesus, there was really nothing noble in what they were doing. They were "warning" Jesus because they knew that the miracles he was performing and his teachings deeply troubled Herod.

Jesus, perhaps realizing their "warning" to be for selfish gain, replied "Go and tell that fox for me, 'Listen, I am casting out demons and performing cures today and tomorrow, and on the third day I finish my work." (Luke **13:32) Jesus was both terse in insulting Herod by** calling him a fox and direct in telling the Pharisees that he had a mission to fulfill and was not going to allow their selfish interests or the threat of death by Herod to deter him from his God given **purpose. Jesus stood believing in the goal** and purpose for his being here on earth. He

[1] Rick Brand. "The Enemy of My Enemy is My Friend." Luke 13:31-35. www.goodpreacher.com

did not run, nor did he try to hide, he **stood firm in his caring for the sick and hungry**, and in bringing good news to the poor. Jesus feared not for his own life, realizing that death would be his end, rather he chose to walk in faith. He chose to believe.

That is what we are called to do in each season of our lives, to believe in the promises of God and trust that God has a purpose in creating us. We are called to fear not, believing in the reassurances we find throughout scripture of God's presence in our lives each second of everyday. Let us look at the **words of David found in today's Psalter reading, "The Lord** is my light and my salvation; whom shall I fear? The Lord is the stronghold of my life; of whom shall I be afraid?" (Psalm 27:1) The Messenger paraphrases this verse in this way: "Light, space, zest – **that's God! So, with [God] on my side I'm fearless**, afraid of no one and nothing."(Psalm 27:1) David stood believing in God's presence and God's deliverance as he shared his fears and his faith in today's Psalter. We are called to stand believing in God's presence and deliverance in those times we might find ourselves afraid. I say to you, take courage God is near.

As we continue to journey this Lenten season we are told to walk in faith, not in fear, as Jesus and David did **believing that we are loved and cared for by God.** We experience that love and care in the quietness and stillness of our hearts, but also when we are gathered together in community with others. It is in gathering together as one body that we are able to not only hear the still speaking voice of God in the faith we share, not only able to see God in the simple gift of **just our presence, but we are also able to touch** God in our simple act of touching one another. Individually and collectively we are to share one mission, to love one another. Jesus tells us it is our greatest commandment, that we love one another. Love one another as he loved us.

One of the major tenets **of the Rev. Barbara Brown Taylor's book, "An** Altar in the World…" is that we are not to get trapped into thinking that God can only be found in the confines of our place of worship, for us here in the church. Rather, we are to believe that God is **present in every place that we step, in** every face that we see, in the gentle singing of a dove, the joyous laughter of a child, and even in the crisp cold air that greets us on a zero degree day. God is present to us and God asks that we be present for one another.

While out on yesterday, a waitress and I were captivated by the CNN coverage of the anticipated Tsunami in Hawaii and the **devastation in Chile following the earthquake there.** Her comment was, "I think God is trying to tell us something. Somebody sure seems angry at us." My response to her was that the natural disasters we are experiencing have to do with how we **have abused the earth and not God's wrath. Each** time there is a natural disaster or something awful happens in our lives all of a sudden God is seen as this vengeful, wrathful God that we all need to cower and hide from, as if we could hide from God. We seek to blame God instead of taking responsibility for the choices we have made. Humankind has decimated and polluted the earth. Akin to a child who breaks the **cookie jar and blames it on her imaginary friend. No**, God is not imaginary, God is real, but folks seem to put more faith in a God who destroys than a God who gives life. We give more reverence to the Herod's of the earth than we do to Jesus. In times **of crises we are often tempted to give that which** destroys more power than the One who gives life. We blame instead of taking responsibility. And yes, we grapple with questions that have no true answer. But, as a people of faith we are called to believe that God is not out to destroy us, but to save us.

Tony Campolo tells the story of **a preaching contest he entered and quite frankly** how he lost to an "Old Veteran" who took to the pulpit and said these seven words, "It is Friday, but

Sunday is coming." The veteran minister went on to explain, "…the despair and hopelessness of this earth was focused on that Friday afternoon when they hung Jesus on that cross. It was the darkest moment in **history. Then came that resurrection of Sunday morning** when God said 'I won't have a world in such despair; I have great hope for my children and that hope must be restored.' And so God gave Jesus back to us for the rebirth of hope. And that's how it is in all our lives. **We suffer some loss, we know pain, we know anguish, we lose our** hope, we hang on a cross of our own. But then we rekindle that spark of hope because it may be Friday, but Sunday is coming. We know that God always has a resurrection for us, the resurrection of our hope. Sometimes you have to say, 'It's Friday.' But in the next breath you say, 'But Sunday is comin.'"[2] A **resurrection of hope and a renewal of** our belief in the God of life, love, and purpose is found in Sunday people.

As a people of faith we are to be Sunday people. I understand that at times when we look **upon the needs and burdens of the world** it can be overwhelming. Where does one person begin? Can one person truly make a difference? I say to you, yes you can. You have been uniquely created by God for God's kin-dom building purpose here on earth. "Perhaps Jesus, feeling threatened by Herod, might also have felt that his mission was beyond him. Some of you, when you began to get a glimmer **of what God intended for your life, may have thought** there were too many obstacles, too many barriers, that you were too weak, too small, too young, too old, too poor, too busy. But I invite you to believe in that to which God has called you, that great **purpose for which you were born. God can, through you, fulfill** that purpose. Perhaps the only real barrier to the fulfillment of God's purpose in your life may be your lack of faith,

[2] Dr. Donald B. Ward. "That Forward Look"- Philippians 3:12-21. www.goodpreacher.com

that God can do it and that you and God together can accomplish that purpose."[3] Seek God in scripture, seek to be **in relationship and to know God in prayer,** seek to know God in the lives of the people and in all of creation around you.

What is required as **a part of the believing in God is a surrendering** of ourselves. Surrendering unto God as David did, "Hear, O Lord, when I cry aloud, be gracious to me and answer me...**Teach me your way, O Lord, and lead me on a level path…"** (Psalm 27:7, 11) Not only do we have David asking for God's presence in his life, but also God's guidance so that he can live the life God would have him to live. He also expresses his belief that God will answer his **plea saying, "I believe that I shall see the goodness** of the Lord in the land of the living." (Psalm 27:13) David surrendered himself believing that with God's help he could fulfill the purpose God had for his life and he would see God's goodness not just in the life hereafter, but among the living here on earth. In this life, he would see and experience God's presence.

During this Lenten season as you journey through your wilderness experience; stand firm, fear not, believing in God's **presence in each moment and every step of your** life. Stand also believing that God created you for God's divine purpose. That purpose, to be in relationship with God and to love one another just as God loves us. I know that this is sometimes difficult and that sometimes our life's journey is difficult. We have Friday experiences, but as people of faith we have experienced and know **that Sunday does come. In the words of David, "Wait for** God- stand tall and let your heart take courage! Yes, wait for [God!]" (Psalm 27:14; The Inclusive Language Bible) Believing that you will experience and know God's presence in your life. **Amen.**

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[3] Carl L. Schenck. "Marks of a Christian Life-Believing" Genesis 15:1-12, 17-18; Luke 13:31-35; www.goodpreacher.com