

Victory of the Lamb – August 26, 2018 – Rest for the Stressed

John 10:27-30 - Safe Not Separated – Pastor Bill Limmer

Five month old Perry loves to lay on his stomach on his blanket on the living room floor surrounded by his toys. One of his toys is a small ball. He will often hit and it will roll away but as long as he can see it, he is ok. But if he hits the ball and it rolls away from him and goes under the couch where he can't see it, oh my. Wails and crocodile tears. But when his mom or dad retrieve the ball from under the couch and Perry can see it again, the crying stops immediately. When Perry can't see the ball, when he is separated from the ball, he thinks the ball is lost forever. With separation there is loss.

Separation hurts. At this time of year many of our 18 and 19 year-olds are going off to college or the military for the first time. Usually that is a lot harder for parents than for children, until there is this thing called Homesickness, separation from the way things were. There is a loss.

Dana grew up in a loving, lower middle class home. She went to college and excelled. Right out of college she was hired by a very reputable company and began training CEO's of other major companies right away. She traveled a lot and made a lot of money. Soon she was promoted. She moved to New York and her boyfriend was to follow. She had plans. It was her birthday and it was mid-afternoon and he had not called yet. So she called. Only to have another woman answer the phone. There was the pain, the agony, there was a separation, the betrayal of loss.

The first separation that ever happened in the history of the world, happened at the tree of separation, and this is the separation that still plagues you and me today. In unparalleled generosity God offer the people of the world all the trees of the world to eat from except one. They could eat and enjoy all the trees except if they eat from one it would be a bitter and death delivering tree. There would be a separation. It is at the heart and ache of every loss that we ever experience today. When the first human beings chose to separate themselves from God's design, plan and purpose, they separated us from God's design, plan and purpose as well. There was and is a loss of the way things are supposed to be. Instead of a beautiful garden there is a bed of weeds; instead of community there is isolation; instead of enjoyment there is the stress of expectations; instead of freedom there is slavery; instead of joy there is grief; instead of harmony there is manipulation; instead of love there is hate; instead of peace there is animosity; instead of purity there is pornography; instead of selflessness there is selfishness; instead of trust there is blame; instead of truth there are lies; instead of walking with God there is running away from God; instead of life there is death. Isaiah 59:2 **Your iniquities have separated you from God.** And if this separation remains in place, there is a point and time when the separation from God becomes a forever thing. Where is the separation in your life from God right now?

The hard thing about this separation is there is no human cure to this separation, not in any previous century, nor in the present, nor in the ones to come. We can't fix this separation by trying harder or going farther, although most of us try. We don't mend this separation by declaring ourselves better than someone else because what I do is not as bad as what you do, although most of us try and that actually demonstrates separation doesn't it. This relationship is not restored because of our accomplishment or good works, although we try. This relationship is not restored by manipulation, or assuring God that we are entitled to it.

Can you imagine what life would be like if that were it? If there were no resolution or relief from this separation. Can you imagine the stress and the strivings, the pain and the suffering that people would go through?

And while there is no human way out, God has the way out. The only way out, offered to all and offered for free to us but it comes at a cost. Here is the cost: Jesus cried out in separation from the cross on which he was crucified, **“My God, My God. Why have you forsaken me?”** This separation is a separation between Jesus, the God and man, and God himself. This is when Jesus was suffering hell itself. Not because he deserved but because we did. And he took our place. He was our proxy, our substitute. Jesus sewed our relationship back together with God not with a sewing machine and thread and needles, but with a crucifixion using hammer and nails on the tree of love, self-sacrifice and safety.

Our separation from the Father ended at the cross. God sold himself out to loving us when he sold out his Son. He will never renege on the contract signed with the holy, innocent, precious lifeblood of Jesus. When Jesus died the curtain of the temple was separated, torn in two from top to bottom. The loss of the temple curtain is our gain. Because the temple curtain was separating us from the Holy of Holies which is where God resided. Our relationship with God is no longer separated but made whole because Jesus has paid for our sins and bought us. And we are his then by grace through faith. What Jesus bought he has. Nothing nor no one can take his from his hands.

John 10:27-30 **My sheep listen to my voice; I know them, and they follow me. ²⁸ I give them eternal life, and they shall never perish; no one will snatch them out of my hand. ²⁹ My Father, who has given them to me, is greater than all^[a]; no one can snatch them out of my Father’s hand. ³⁰ I and the Father are one.”** I have a quarter in my hand. Imagine, if I went to the Infant Room in Victory Kids wing and I told those little ones to try and get the quarter out of my hand. Do you think they would be able to do it? The point is Jesus has every believer, and he invites everyone to come to faith, he has every believer in his hand. And He says no one can snatch us out of his hand. The devil wants us to snatch us out of his hand but he doesn’t have the ability to do so. And sometimes we may be afraid that our sins might snatch us out of his hands but they cannot. God and his one of kind all powerful strength and love will not let us go

In Baptism, he put his name on us and we are his. When Macie was baptized, God filled her heart with faith, and now holds her close to his heart. No one, nothing, not even Satan can snatch Macie or you or me from God’s hands. We are safe and secure because: 1. We are in His possession. 2. We are in His power. By grace through faith we are holy. We are holy not because we don’t sin. Unfortunately, there have been times when all of us don’t look or act holy. The way we talk, treat others, what we do when no one is looking – all these things and more make us look like we don’t belong to God. But God doesn’t call us holy because of how we look or act. He calls us holy because Jesus is holy in our place. By grace through faith our sins are forgiven and covered by Jesus holiness. But some of you might be, but that is good and great for everybody but me, but you don’t know me. You don’t know what is in my heart. You don’t know how bad I am. He paid for your sins in full. If you are a wandering sheep, know this: The Lord is more committed to you that you are to Him! He’s more faithful to you than you are to Him. He loves you where you are, but loves you too much to leave you there! He’ll do what it takes to bring you home. You are right, I don’t know your past, but I know Jesus past, his death and his victorious resurrection. And I know what God says, **“Nothing can separate us from love of God that is in Christ Jesus our Lord.”**

Just like an infant can't snatch the coin out of my hand so no one can snatch you out of Jesus hands. Even though you and I make mistakes, sometimes we do some really extraordinary too, God tells us he will never let go. That means that Jesus is always forgiving and loving us. That means that Jesus has an unconditional love for you. When Jesus died on the cross and rose again he defeated the separating enemies of sin, death and Satan. He holds us now and takes care of us and we are safe and secure..

Since you are safe and secure in God's hands, what can that truth look like in the day to day? Do you think you can have: compassion on the marginalized; love for your enemies; pray for those who are a pain in your neck or lower; take time to be present in someone else's life; serve in joy, give generously, turn a page away from temptation instead of turning into it; trust in times of turmoil. Being safe in God's powerful and loving hands changes things, changes people. Being in Jesus hands is transformational because you are safe, body and soul, for time and for eternity. Amen