

Introduction

Check-in & Introductions

"Caught in the Snide!"

Watch

Follow this link and watch "What Was I Scared Of?" by Dr. Seuss.

<https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=7v7LFjLIZ3s>

Old Testament Lesson

Deuteronomy 10:12-22 (NSRV)

¹²So now, O Israel, what does the LORD your God require of you? Only to fear the LORD your God, to walk in all his ways, to love him, to serve the LORD your God with all your heart and with all your soul, ¹³and to keep the commandments of the LORD your God and his decrees that I am commanding you today, for your own well-being.

¹⁴Although heaven and the heaven of heavens belong to the LORD your God, the earth with all that is in it, ¹⁵yet the LORD set his heart in love on your ancestors alone and chose you, their descendants after them, out of all the peoples, as it is today.

¹⁶Circumcise, then, the foreskin of your heart, and do not be stubborn any longer.

¹⁷For the LORD your God is God of gods and Lord of lords, the great God, mighty and awesome, who is not partial and takes no bribe, ¹⁸who executes justice for the orphan and the widow, and who loves the strangers, providing them food and clothing.

¹⁹You shall also love the stranger, for you were strangers in the land of Egypt. ²⁰You shall fear the LORD your God; him alone you shall worship; to him you shall hold fast, and by his name you shall swear. ²¹He is your praise; he is your God, who has done for you these great and awesome things that your own eyes have seen. ²²Your ancestors went down to Egypt seventy persons; and now the LORD your God has made you as numerous as the stars in heaven.

Sermon Focus

In our text from Deuteronomy, part of the Law of God, we are reminded that we are to look out for those who are oppressed, named here as the widow, the orphan, and the stranger. Deuteronomy names these categories because those were the people who could not own property or fend for themselves. Deuteronomy says, "You shall also love the stranger, for you were strangers in the land of Egypt."

Our author is tapping into the corporate memory of a community. *Remember*, says the author... *Remember* when it was you without a home. *Remember* when you were slaves in Egypt. *Remember* when it was you who were wandering in the wilderness. *Remember* when you were the oppressed.

What adds another interesting layer here is that this Law was given to the people when they were *still* wandering in the wilderness. They were still a people with no home and no land. God gives them this law as a reminder to never forget the times

that were hard. God is pointing to a day when the people will have land, and resources, and power.

God is reminding them that one day, they will no longer be the "other." One day they will not be pushed aside. One day they will have the power to push others aside. What the people will do with their newfound place in the world, matters. So, God gives them this law.

To see the stranger as a beloved child of God, to move past our fears of the "other" requires us to get to know them. Like in our Dr. Seuss story for today, once we are able to know the person we fear, we may find that we really had nothing to fear at all. Perhaps even a friendship, or mutual respect can be shared. This is what the community of faith looks like. This is what the kingdom of God looks like. To work through our fears, fears that could easily turn to conflict unless confronted. To work through our fear of the "other" and to see each other as equal, beloved members of the body.

Discussion Questions

- 1) Share a story of when you have confronted a fear and been changed.
- 2) Share a time when you were, metaphorically, in "Egypt" or the "wilderness." How did it change how you relate to others?
- 3) How has love transformed you?
- 4) Reflect on this passage from 1 John 4:18-21 *"There is no fear in love, but perfect love casts out fear; for fear has to do with punishment, and whoever fears has not reached perfection in love. We love because he first loved us. Those who say, "I love God," and hate their brothers or sisters, are liars; for those who do not love a brother or sister whom they have seen, cannot love God whom they have not seen. The commandment we have from him is this: those who love God must love their brothers and sisters also."*

Prayer

Holy God, let your light shine into our hearts until they are warmed with compassion for those we do not understand. Help us to welcome the stranger. Be with us when we fear being the stranger ourselves. Amen.

"But then a strange thing happened. Why, those pants began to cry! Those pants began to tremble. They were just as scared as I! I never heard such whimpering and I began to see that I was just as strange to them as they were strange to me!"