**Fugitives And Wanderers**

**Genesis 4:1-15**

*Trinity XI – 08.15.2021*

Grace to you and peace from God our Father and our Lord and Savior Jesus Christ. Amen.

Cain complained that God’s punishment was too harsh. He was going to be a fugitive and a wanderer. His great sin? He did not think that he was to care for his brother. He was jealous of his brother. It led him to commit murder.

Have you ever been someplace where you really felt out of place? You were invited to a party maybe, and the only person you knew was the person throwing the party? How about joining a new company and going to the orientation or the first week of work, you do not know anybody? Moved to a new community and you hadn’t made any friends yet? In today’s cultural climate, your views about a particular “subject” find you vilified by those who had previously been close friends, or even family members?

Each of those situations makes us feel a bit out of place, or maybe even like we do not belong.

You just moved into a new town with your family because of your job. Some people will love you, because of your job – others will hate you, because of your job – but having friends is out of the question. You are the new teacher, cop, pastor in the area. People may treat you well, shower you with affection, pray for you, but hanging out with you is not going to happen. Yes, those who serve in those professions never are quite as accepted in the community as others are – especially those who have lived in that community for their whole life.

Let us up the ante a little bit. How do you treat strangers in your midst? Someone new moves into the community, what do you do? Do you even notice? When you do notice, what do you do? Did you put on a smile on your face, walk over to their house, and welcome them to the community? Or do you sit around with your friends and talk about the new family that moved in, who they are… where did they came from… what do they do… how long will they stay? That is often how it works, but you never went over talk to them live and in person?

How about the stranger who visited church? You know who I mean. You stared at the during the sermon. Maybe it was someone you knew, and were wondering, “what are they were doing in my church.” By the way, not a very nice, loving, Christian attitude!

Maybe you did not know them at all, never saw them before in your life. Remember how you felt in a strange setting where you didn’t know anybody – maybe visiting a church when you were out of town? How great would it have been if someone would have come up to you, introduced themselves to you, and welcomed you?

As for that visitor in “your” church. Did you notice them lost in their hymnal? What did you do – snicker to your family members and point out how lost they were? Or, did you go sit next to them, introduce yourself, and ask if they could use your help to find their way around the service?

Maybe they were strangers, but they obviously knew their way around the hymnal. They were still sojourners in our midst, did you take a moment introduce yourself, welcome them, and let them know that you hope the come back again.

Dear friends, our life in the world as Christians is as strangers. We are fugitives and wanderers in a hostile environment. A hymn in our hymnal states just that. You probably know it well. It is entitled, “I’m But A Stranger Here.” And why is that? Heaven is my home.

You and I need to open our eyes and look around. All those created in God’s image are supposed to be fugitives and wanderers. They should fear, love, and trust in their Creator. And we need to welcome them into the community of faith which is where we are fed and nourished to wander in the wilderness which is not our home.

Dearly beloved of God, our world is becoming more and more hostile to us as Christians. We are ostracized for what we believe and what we teach. Of course, there are many Christians who are trying to be loved by the world. They do not want to be outcasts, fugitives or wanderers. So, they abandon God’s Word in order to get along with world. This is sad!

They would never claim they are doing that though. They believe they are just more enlightened than those of us who believe that the Scripture is the inerrant and God-inspired Word of God. To use a phrase used heavily in other contexts, they are following the science, not just blindly following an outdated book.

Jesus said that Christians are to be strangers even to themselves. OK, not in so many words, but He did tell us that if we are to be His followers, then we must deny ourselves, take up our cross, and follow Him. (Mt. 16:24) “Deny yourselves,” Christ commands. Drown the desires of your own flesh. We must not heed the siren calls of the world beckoning us so seductively. It is tough, our sinful nature wants to go along. But we are to be different than everybody else. We have been baptized into Christ, we have been made holy, and we are to daily put to death our sinful nature.

Dear friends, how do you treat strangers? Maybe I should ask it this way, “How do you want to be treated?” What did Jesus teach about this? “Do unto others, as you would have them do unto you – this fulfills the Torah and the Prophets.” (Mt. 7:12) Unfortunately, our sinfulness in this regard is plainly evident. We do not treat everybody as we would like to be treated. Join me in my response to this truth – bow your heads with me in repentance.

Of course, Jesus was the greatest fugitive and wanderer? Think about it. He is the Word that was and is God, who was with God in the beginning, by whom all things were made. All of creation is His handiwork! He made it all! To truly understand how Jesus was treated, and what Jesus has done, we need to understand those simple facts first.

The Word of God, the 2nd person of the Trinity, True God, took on human flesh. How was the Creator of all that exists treated? It does not take much consideration to see that He was a fugitive and wanderer.

In His own hometown they would not listen to Him. In fact, they tried to stone Him. When He went to Jerusalem, to the temple where they claimed to worship Him, He was despised and hated. It was the chief priests, those who claimed to lead the people in worship of Him, who led the people to demand that Jesus – their God in human flesh – be put to death.

Why did they hate Him so? Because He said it was more important to love than it was to do nothing on the Sabbath. They hated Him because He brought forgiveness to all, especially those the church leaders thought unforgiveable. He was a fugitive who wandered about bringing life and healing to those who needed it – to all created in His image.

Jesus was loved by the masses. He was thought to be a threat to the Jewish leadership. Finally, even those who cheered Him, the crowds that followed Him, all clamored and screamed that He be crucified.

Of course, that was the plan. God in human flesh is His brothers’ keeper. Out of love for sinners, He fulfilled the Father’s will. Loving all, He allowed Himself to be put to death.

His resurrection three days later was a bold proclamation that all life with Him in His kingdom is the real home of those who are wanderers and fugitives in this world. Those who have faith in His life and work have a resurrection and life like unto His.

So dear friends, let us not get too comfortable in this world we like to love. Remember the words of Jesus. (Jn 15:18-25)

"If the world hates you, know that it has hated me before it hated you. If you were of the world, the world would love you as its own; but because you are not of the world, but I chose you out of the world, therefore the world hates you. Remember the word that I said to you: 'A servant is not greater than his master.' If they persecuted me, they will also persecute you. If they kept my word, they will also keep yours. But all these things they will do to you on account of my name, because they do not know him who sent me… Whoever hates me hates my Father also.”

Those who have faith in Christ, boldly confessing His name, are fugitives and wanderers in this world. We will be persecuted and hated, just as He was – and is.

You gather together in this place for we know and trust that we are those whom Christ has loved. We are those whom Christ has called to Himself. His Word has worked in our hearts, His Spirit has moved us to be different in the world. He has changed us who bear His name.

You have gathered today in the only home for fugitives and wanderers in the world, those who bear the name of Christ. Here you are welcome. This is where your God comes to bless you and feed you. Here you throw off the trappings of the world and are robed with Christ’s righteousness. Here you learn that you are not alone, for there are other fugitives and wanderers who share your name and wander with you. Look around, see your family, they bear your name, the name Christian.

In this place, you are no longer fugitives and wanderers. Here you are the redeemed – the forgiven of God. Forgiven for treating others as you would never want to be treated. You are cleansed of the sinfulness of keeping yourselves strangers from those God has gathered into His house. You are forgiven for thinking you are not your brothers’ keeper.

We are gathered by God with one another that we might all be forgiven together.

We are gathered by God with one another that we might be strengthened together, built up together, made one body in Christ – together.

As One we hear! As one we gather at table with Him who is our Head, our meat and drink. We are united at this table with all those who have gone before us in the faith – all the company of heaven. While unseen, we are together with them in the One, true faith – gathered together in Him who is our head.

Dear friends, yes, we are fugitives and wanderers in the world because we are One in Christ. We are the holy ones of God, citizens of an eternal, holy, kingdom – heirs of an eternal home. Thanks be to God that this is our reality together in Christ Jesus our Lord. Amen.