

Sermon 2010 Lent 2

Text: Luke 13:31-35

Theme: "Rejects Unite!"

Jesus made his way toward Jerusalem where everything was about to happen. Jerusalem was the focal point of Jesus' ministry because it was Jerusalem where the temple was. The temple is important because that is where the people knew that God dwelled in the holy of holies but rather than dedicate their lives to serving God, they treated him more like a lucky rabbit's foot in a box, stored away from the rest of the world. I used to have a lucky rabbit's foot like that. I had it hidden in an old cigar box, under a blanket behind my bed. When I really wanted something, I would take out my lucky rabbit's foot and wish on it...until one day when my older brother pointed out that it had not been so lucky for the rabbit and then all the magic was gone for me.

At any rate the people of God thought of God the way I thought of my rabbit's foot. They took care of the place where they kept him and they followed the rules of worship and sacrifice but was God honestly at the center of their lives? No and who really wants him to be? Right? Wouldn't our human nature love all the benefits of eternal

life without having to deal with God on a day to day basis? I know that we are not supposed to talk that way but I have a propensity for honesty. Do whatever you want. Live however you want. And just show up here once a week and put a couple bucks in the offering and voila! Eternal Life!

But that is not the way it works. God gave us family on earth to show us how our relationship with him works. How long will a marriage survive if there is no commitment to it – even if all the outward vestures are intact? How deep is the relationship between parent and child if they never talk, never eat together, never play together? Likewise, God cannot be kept in a box or the relationship dies. Our hand of faith withers and falls away and we forget why God was important in the first place.

On the other hand, maintaining a deep and abiding relationship with God – that is setting aside time to read and study his word, spending time regularly in prayer, sacrificing for him by foregoing worldly pleasure so that you can give a faithful offering and being here week after week to worship him – maintaining a deep and abiding

relationship with God will make you an outcast to the world. You will be rejected as he was rejected.

Jesus was all well and good while he was going around and healing people and providing free food, but then the demands started. Worship God with your lives, not just your lips. What right does he have to indict me? Who does he think he is? The people were not willing to change the patterns of their lives to conform to his demands and so they rejected him.

I don't think we always really consider what we are asking when we ask someone to follow Christ. We don't pay very close attention to the demands that are both implied and flat out demanded. God is a jealous God. He says that of himself. So don't be surprised when you are rejected just as Jesus was rejected. But also don't forget that the Holy Spirit can work in amazing ways.

Bishop Gilbert of the Northern Illinois District said the following,

"There is no magic bullet; there is no canned program you can buy and take home and start to use and suddenly dozens of unbelievers will start coming to your church. But there is a poison pill: preach the Gospel to those who are already members while failing to

invite unbelievers. Many, maybe even most of the things we do to invite people will not work. But everything we don't try won't work."

Many, maybe even most of the things we try won't work. We will be rejected as Jesus was rejected. BUT, it is an absolute guarantee that everything we don't try won't work!

Rejection is a way of life for us. Rejects unite! We have turned away from the ways of Satan. We have repented of paths that are not Godly and we strive to follow Jesus, the Lord of the Rejects! We do this not because we have low self esteem or feel unable to make our way in this world but because we know that this world is a sham! Everything good and joyful is a God given diversion from reality and everything horrid and deadly is the real world. By the way, I like the show "Real World" on MTV because it honestly depicts the real world and I live in hope that teens and tweens will watch that show and say, "I want something better than this trash." Maybe then they will turn to us and ask for something better. The "Real World" rejects us and that is okay because we reject it as well. By the power of our Baptismal waters, we have turned away and rejected fame and

fortune, pleasure and pretense in this world. Now we seek to bring whomever we can with us.

Now we are on our journey to our Jerusalem where we will face our deaths and inherit our eternal reward. Like Jesus, as we journey we proclaim the truth. In Middle School, High School and College we proclaim to a dark and shallow world that there are more important things than grades, physical beauty and having so-called fun that hurts, demeans and debases human beings including yourself. In our 20's and 30's we proudly proclaim that money and success will not purchase anything eternal and that our hearts are where our treasure is. In our middle years we reject the luxuries and toys to instead fund the mission and ministry of proclaiming the Gospel. In our later years we mentor the young Christians behind us and at our deaths we witness to those who watch us die and show them how to leave this "Real World" and journey to a perfect world with no fear and no regrets. It is our journey to Jerusalem, rejected by many because it looks too hard, too full of sacrifice, but we know that it is full of joy and peace.

“Many, maybe even most of the things we do to invite people will not work. But everything we don’t try won’t work.” So rejects unite and do whatever you can to reach out to this dying world. Reach out with love and concern for the shallow, the misinformed, the smug, the secure and invite them to walk with us. You most certainly will often be rejected, but everything we don’t try definitely will not work.

Amen.