

Sermon – 08/10/2006 pm

Underneath are the Everlasting Arms

Study Text: Deuteronomy 33:26-29

Have you ever seen a father calling to his child ‘jump – jump now for I am here to catch you’? You may well have done this yourself. You expect the child to trust you and jump when you tell them. But do you trust your heavenly Father to catch you when he calls upon you to jump. Do you trust him to uphold you when he calls you to follow him, to step out in faith and go where he calls you to go, or do what he calls you to do? Do you believe that underneath are the everlasting arms of the almighty and all-loving God?

Moses was giving his farewell blessing to the tribes of Israel when he spoke these words. He would not be crossing over the Jordan, but they were about to do so. They were about to enter the unknown. They feared what lay ahead, the giants living in fortified cities in Canaan.

Can you recall a similar time in your life, a time when you were embarking on something unknown? Maybe you have such fears even now. What will tomorrow bring, what will come your way next week, next year? Do you worry about relationships, about work, about finances, about your health, about death? The Lord says he will uphold you; he is your refuge and strength, your help in time of trouble.

Unique God

The God of Israel is unique. *There is no one like the God of Jeshurun* (33:26). This was the word of the Lord through his servant Moses. He gave the same word to the prophets, and indeed all Scripture resounds to this great truth – there is but one God, the God of Abraham, Isaac and Jacob, the God of Moses, of David and Solomon and of Peter and Paul. There is but one God, the living and true God.

To whom will you liken me, or to whom shall I be equal says the Holy One (Isaiah 40:25)

I am the first and the last, besides me there is no God (Isaiah 46:6).

The God of Israel, our God, is unique. There is none like him. He cannot be compared to other gods.

Let us remember this in midst of pluralism which pervades our society. We see many so called gods being worshipped today, and our children are being called upon to choose which one or ones they will worship. The truth that the God of Israel, the God of the Bible is unique is not welcomed by our society.

To claim as the Bible does that there is only one God, the living and true God, is regarded as arrogant and intolerant by many today. People in India would listen to the gospel, the ‘sermon on the mount’ at least, and they would accept Jesus as a great man, a prophet, and even a god. But to claim that he was unique, to claim that he was the only true God was going too far. Those who claimed this were often rejected by their family, ostracised by society, even beaten

and murdered. Jesus, one God among many, was an acceptable position to hold; not so Jesus the only true God and way of salvation for all mankind.

What is the evidence for this bold claim? Look at the pages of history – yes the Bible is historical! Moses invites you to examine what the God of Israel did for his people. The New Testament writers invite you to examine the mighty works of Jesus along with his words. God is almighty; he is powerful to save and to destroy. God dwells on his throne in heaven; he is eternal and continues to uphold his people.

Firstly, God is almighty. He destroyed the king of Egypt and his great army as he delivered his chosen people. He destroyed two Amorite kings as he brought his people to the banks of the Jordan. And *He will thrust out the enemy from before you* (33:27) said Moses. He will give you victory over your enemies. *You shall tread down their high places* or literally ‘their bodies’. The picture here is that of putting your foot on the neck of your defeated foe. No god, no king, no man in heaven or earth can withstand the Almighty God of Israel.

God does not just exist in the imagination of men as some may think. He is not man made like other gods. *He rides the heavens to help you, and in his excellency on the clouds* (33:6). God does not dwell in temples made by man. His throne is in the heaven. He made the universe and he fills the universe. He dwells in the high and holy place; he inhabits eternity (Isaiah 57:15).

Secondly, God is powerful to save and uphold his people. These were a people saved by the Lord. These were a helpless people whom the Lord came down to deliver out of bondage and save from their enemies. And having saved them he was powerful to keep them.

In the desert God provided bread from heaven and water from the rock. He gave his people their daily bread. He would provide for them in their own land – *a land of grain and new wine; his heavens shall also drop dew* (33:28). The Lord would protect them and keep them safe from their enemies. He was like a sword and shield to them.

Finally God is eternal. He is infinite with no beginning and no end. Other gods come and they go. Look in the history books and will find when other gods came into being. They are the product of some man’s imagination. But the Bible opens with the declaration *in the beginning God created the heavens and the earth*. God was there at creation for he created all things. *I am the first and the last* we heard him say through Isaiah.

God is eternal. *The eternal God is your refuge, and underneath are the everlasting arms* (33:27). What a tremendous promise! God is ever-present and everlasting. He is always there to help you in your time of need. You can call upon him day and night. You can call upon him in the city or in the country, at home or at work, inside the church and outside the church.

The eternal God is your refuge. Have you experienced the Lord as your refuge or do you seek refuge in other places. Do you rely on your learning or strength, do you rely on family or friends, or do you rely on your money. All these may fail at some time but the Lord will never fail you. Underneath are the everlasting arms.

Unique People

Having a unique God makes you a unique person – or one of a fellowship of unique persons. *Happy are you, O Israel! Who is like you, a people saved by the Lord (33:29)?* You belong to God because he chose you and he saved you. You did not choose him but he chose you and saved you. Remember this if you want to know the fullness of God's blessing or happiness.

If you rely upon the fact that you chose the Lord you will not enjoy this blessed assurance. You will never be 100% certain that you are a child of God. There will always be a doubt or a fear that you made some mistake or that you will fail in some way. True happiness comes from knowing you are saved by the Lord according to this Scripture.

The children of Israel were to remember that they were in bondage in Egypt. Their own history told them they could do nothing and had done nothing to save themselves. They cried out to the Lord and he heard their cry. He came down and brought them out by a mighty hand and outstretched arm, and by great terrors. *To you it was shown* said Moses *that you might know that the Lord himself is God; there is not other besides him (Deuteronomy 4:35).*

Saved by the grace and power of God alone! Can you say this of yourself? Do you believe that God was pleased to send his only Son into this world to deliver you from bondage to sin? Do you believe that the blood of Jesus Christ is powerful to cleanse you from all sin? If so you should be a happy person. You are a special person both as an individual and as a member of the unique family of God.

You should be happy in being saved by the true God and in being upheld by him. He did not save you and then leave you to fend for yourself and do what you like. He saved you to bless you as his child. He saved you to live in obedience to him and bring glory to his holy name.

According to a recent survey in Britain 65% of the population call themselves Christians, but only 17% attend church regularly. The vast majority those calling themselves Christians live as if God did not exist. They live like pagans. They have no hunger for the word of this unique God and no desire for fellowship with the unique people of God. They do not regard themselves as unique or different from the next person – apart from the label Christian they write on the census form.

No wonder these people are not happy or content. No wonder they are restless. Their god may as well be dead for all the difference he makes to their life. They have no hope in this world or the next. They do not know God as their saviour. They do not know the eternal God as their refuge. They do not know that underneath are the everlasting arms. Do you?

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