

Exodus 34:1-8

April 5, 2020

“A New Beginning!”

Our Redeemer Lutheran Church

Palm Sunday

Pastor Hartwig

Grace, mercy, and peace from God, our Heavenly Father, and Jesus Christ, our Lord and Savior. Amen! Dear brothers and sisters in Christ –

[Introduction]

Jimmy... a little boy.

Jimmy learned never to trust a soul. That’s why he never unpacked his bag.

And we can’t blame him.

Jimmy never knew his father,

and his mother spent more time in jail than out of jail.

When he was small,

his mother got out of jail again and took up with a troublemaker again.

They loaded Jimmy into the backseat of their Oldsmobile Delta 88.

For a whole year the car was Jimmy’s home.

He learned ... to never to trust a soul.

That’s why Jimmy Wayne never unpacked his bag.

After living in the back seat of a car for a year,

Jimmy Wayne was dumped off at the train depot in Pensacola, Florida.

His mother and her boyfriend sped away in their Delta 88.

This little boy ... Jimmy desperately needed a new beginning.

[A New Beginning]

Exodus 34. It’s all about a new beginning.

Aaron, Israel’s high priest, needs a new beginning.

So does Israel.

And—most certainly—so do we!

A new beginning is absolutely necessary.

In Exodus 32 Aaron and the Israelites were faced with a huge crisis.

Remember, they hadn’t seen Moses for 40 days and 40 nights.

And they began to wonder.

Was Moses dead? Did Moses leave them?

Aaron and the Israelites grow impatient

so, they make a golden calf and they worship it!

Like them or not, in a huge crisis the IRS knows exactly what to do.
The IRS Handbook states, and I quote,

“During a state of national emergency, the essential functions of the IRS will be as follows; assessing, collecting and recording taxes.”

While everyone panics, the IRS knows exactly what to do! Get our money!

But when faced with the huge crisis of not having Moses,
Aaron and the Israelites have no idea what to do!
That’s why they build a golden calf and worship it!

What does Moses do when he comes down from Mt. Sinai?
Moses smashes the Ten Commandments,
grinds up the golden calf, mixes it with water,
and makes the people drink it!
Golden Calf Cool-Aid!

We pick up the narrative in Exodus 34:1,
“Then Yahweh told Moses, ‘Chisel out two stone tablets like the first ones. I will write on them the same words that were on the tablets you smashed.’”
The Ten Commandments have been smashed!
That’s why new beginning is absolutely necessary.

Let’s face it. We’re not that much different than Aaron and the Israelites.
What do we do when faced with a crisis?
We become angry, we become impatient, faithless, and selfish.
We turn to our golden calves and look to them for salvation.

God—the holy and righteous and perfect God
—this God has every right to dump us off
at a train depot in Pensacola, Florida and ride off into the sunset.
But he doesn’t! Our God doesn’t do that!

[*Comes Down*]

A new beginning is totally possible.

“Then Yahweh came down in a cloud and stood there with Moses. He called out his name, Yahweh” (Ex 34:5).

That is God’s intimate and personal name – Yahweh –
Usually translated the LORD.

You know...Yahweh frequently comes down in the book of Exodus.

Exodus 3:8, Yahweh came down in the burning bush.

Exodus 19:20, Yahweh came down on Mt. Sinai.

Exodus 40:34, Yahweh came down to fill the tabernacle
with his cloud and his glory.

Get it? We can't go up to God.

That's why God comes down to us,

right where we are—in the basement of our broken commandments.

And what does God do when he comes down?

Scold us? Shame us? Berate us? Reject us? Condemn us?

No! God cries out, "***Yahweh! Yahweh!***"

The compassionate and gracious God, slow to anger,

abounding in steadfast-love and faithfulness,

maintaining love to thousands,

and lifting up wickedness, rebellion and sin."

A new beginning is totally possible!

This is our God. He tells us who He is. He is...

Compassionate.

The idea of compassion expresses the emotional connection

that a mother has for a child in her womb.

That's how God feels about you!

The Flamingos get it right.

God says, "My love must be a kind of blind love.

I only have eyes for you!"

Our God is...

Slow to anger.

If God was quick to anger, his compassion wouldn't last a second in my life.

If God shot rockets of wrath every time I sinned,

I would be blown to smithereens.

But God shouts from Sinai, "I am slow to anger!"

Our God is...

Abounding in steadfast love.

"Abounding" announces that God's steadfast love isn't limited.

God is like the federal government.

Whenever there's a need, God just prints off more steadfast love!

But there is a difference!

God has an infinite treasury of steadfast love to cover all the currency he prints.

God's infinite resources of steadfast love will never run out!

God go in debt? God go bankrupt? Never! Ever!

Our God is...

Lifting up.

Lifting up wickedness, rebellion, and sin.

There are only three Hebrew words for sin

and God uses all three right here.

He shows us that he lifts up every type of sin.

There are no categories of unforgivable sins.

Yahweh lifts up wickedness, rebellion, and sin.

“Wickedness” means twisted depravity. It means we are crooked and bent.

“Rebellion” refers to treason against our covenant King—Yahweh.

“Sin” means missing the mark.

The Ten Commandments are the bull's eye.

We take aim and miss them far too often.

Yahweh lifts up wickedness, rebellion, and sin.

[***Palm Sunday***]

And where does he put *ALL* of it?

That brings us to Palm Sunday.

Jesus rides into Jerusalem on a donkey on a Sunday

because the following Friday he is going to

lift up the huge mess

our wickedness, rebellion and sin

and place it upon himself

—all wickedness, rebellion, and sin!

Upon the cross.

Jesus is Yahweh, in the flesh, “***the compassionate and gracious God, slow to anger, abounding in steadfast-love and faithfulness, maintaining love to thousands, and lifting up wickedness, rebellion, and sin.***”

Jesus teaches this love.
Jesus lives this love.
Jesus demonstrates this love by shedding his blood on the cross for you.

Palm Sunday announces it.
Good Friday shows it.
And Easter Sunday celebrates it!

[Conclusion]

One day, while aimlessly walking around Pensacola, Florida,
little Jimmy spotted a man named Russ working in his garage.
Soon Russ and his wife Bea invited Jimmy to live with them.
The home was like heaven!
A hot bath, hot meals, and even TV!

But most importantly...
Jimmy had learned never to trust a soul.
Jimmy still wouldn't unpack his bag.

A new beginning is entirely optional.
We can refuse to unpack our bag.
We can reject divine love.
We can be callous and aloof.

But that's not Moses!
"Moses immediately threw himself to the ground and worshiped" (Ex 34:8).
I invite you to follow Moses.
Trust that God is who he says he is.

God's abounding steadfast love surrounds us!
Palm Sunday. Maundy Thursday. Good Friday. Easter Sunday.

Jimmy had been rejected so many times
that he was much more like a rock—a hard, unmoved rock.
We get that. We really do.
That's why Jimmy never unpacked his bag.

It took another month before Russ and Bea convinced Jimmy
that their love for him was real.
So finally, finally—Jimmy unpacked his bag!

That little boy Jimmy is Jimmy Wayne
a famous country music singer and songwriter.
And his story is true.
He travels the country as a motivational speaker.

It is important to note:
But his new beginning started when he learned to trust
—when he finally unpacked his bag.

It's Palm Sunday! Hosanna! Hosanna in the highest!
Trust in the Lord!
Our past is behind us.
God's grace is before us.
And thanks be to God...
We have a new beginning. Amen.

As followers of Christ, "Keep loving one another earnestly
And show hospitality to one another without grumbling." AMEN! (1 Pt 4:8-9)
