

## 2010 Global Mission Lenten Series Reflection for the Second Week in Lent

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Palestine

Psalm 105:1-15  
2<sup>nd</sup> Chronicles 20:1-22  
Luke 13:22-31

*O give thanks to the Lord, call on his name, make known his deeds among the peoples.  
Sing to God, sing praises to God, tell all of God's wonderful works! Psalm 105: 1-2*

While beginning a Bible study on Joshua with the 2009-10 Young Adults in Global Mission (YAGM) group, we made two lists pertaining to our spiritual understandings of God: What are the “attributes” of God? What are the “actions” of God? (You might try this in your family setting, in a class, or Bible study.) All six of these YAGM (Young Adults in Global Mission) have been nurtured, loved and valued in the Lutheran Church. They are familiar with scripture and know stories from the Bible. Several have been in religious studies in their universities, from which they recently graduated. We spent more than thirty minutes on these lists. Another way to think about these lists is to ask, “What is God like?” and “What has God done?”

Psalm 105 is an example of praising God for mighty acts of creation and continual presence in the lives of the people: works, miracles, judgments, promises, protection and remembrances describe what God was doing in the lives of the children of Israel. They were trusting Holy God for keeping a covenant to Abraham (verse 42).

The Luke 13 reading has Jesus going through towns and villages here in the “Holy Land.” He is asked about the number who will be “saved” and he includes Abraham in his reply about “who is in” and “who is out.” Turning things upside down was often Jesus’ style and when he says “some are last who will be first and some are first who will be last,” we can use our imaginations and project that things are not always as they seem.

How does this apply to our lives today and what attributes do we see in scripture which guide our present lives? Luke 13:34 for me echoes today as a plea from Jesus to people everywhere: **“Jerusalem, Jerusalem, how often have I desired to gather your children together as a hen gathers her brood under her wings, and you were not willing.”**

As coordinators for the YAGM program, my husband and I are sometimes discouraged about the use of scripture which implies that only “one group” of people have “rights” to occupy this land. This place is to be a resting place for all the people of God and so we cannot read one or two selections of scripture and find any easy way out for understanding God’s purpose for this land. What if we allowed scripture to question us? God gives rest for the exhausted, restores the humanity of the oppressed, satisfies the hungry and supports the weak. This goes for Christians, Jews and Muslims alike.

***This is a land of promise for all people!***

If we were living thousands of years ago, we would be part of a ruthless culture and we, too, might think that God is vengeful, punishing and desires sacrifices. Our list of God's attributes and our list of God's actions would be quite different than those we would compile today. Now there is an expanding and evolving revelation of God's intentions for humankind: Jesus' words about gathering in as a mother hen are quite radically loving. The compassion of Jesus changes our hearts!

Last week I drove the eleven-year-old ELCA-GM van named "Bruno" to a beautiful Israeli nature preserve named Ein Gedi. We were on a desert road when the right front tire blew out and all eight of us were safe, but concerned about how to change this tire. Along came a good "Israeli-Samaritan" named Benjamin who kindly took over and rescued us. The YAGM volunteers in the Lutheran Schools here in the Occupied West Bank (Ramallah, Beit Sahour, Bethlehem) have little contact with Israelis, except for the soldiers at the checkpoints. For us on the road near Jericho, Benjamin was our "savior." No, he didn't gather us as a mother hen, but he cared for us and helped us without any desire for reward. His actions were merciful and extravagant. We saw the light of compassion in his eyes and were reminded in living color of this verse:

"I now realize how true it is that God does not show favoritism, but accepts people from every nation who fear God and do what is right."

Acts 10:34-35