

Do You Regret God? **Sermon for the Second Sunday** **of Lent, Lectionary Year C**

There are many powerful, comforting, inspiring images of our Lord and Savior Jesus Christ in the Bible:

- ✦ The Resurrection and the Life
- ✦ The Gate
- ✦ The Way and the Truth
- ✦ Prince of Peace
- ✦ King of Kings
- ✦ Risen Victorious Lord.

What are you favorite Biblical image of Jesus? Lamb of God? Messiah? Bridegroom? Lion of Judah?

Probably one image of Jesus that does not pop into your mind's eye is that of a mother hen. Yes, that's right, Jesus the mother hen.

Yet, here we have it, in today's Gospel reading, Jesus speaks of himself as a mother hen longing to gather her brood beneath her wings, safe and secure.

From the 34th verse of the 13th chapter of the Gospel According to Luke:

“Jerusalem, ah Jerusalem, you kill the prophets, you stone the messengers God has sent you. How many times I wanted to put my arms around you just as a hen gathers her children beneath her wings, but you would not let me,” says Jesus.

Oh, my. Can you hear the regret in his voice? “How many times I wanted to put my arms around you, to keep you safe just as a hen gathers her chicks beneath her wings, but you would not let me.”

I hear regret. Do you sense the regret of Jesus?

Let’s talk about regret this morning. Have you ever regretted Jesus? Does Jesus regret you?

Biblical scholars tell us that the same word often translated *repent* in scripture can be translated *regret*.

Do you remember the old disaster movie, *Towering Inferno*? It was the story of how the man who had built this massive skyscraper insisted on staying under budget. One way he stayed under budget was by skimping on the electrical safety equipment and, therefore, violating the city's building code. It seemed like a fun movie, good fiction, high drama, excellent entertainment. Paul Newman and Steve McQueen in the same movie? Come on, how's that for cool?

Yet, it was not entertaining or cool in 1980 when the MGM Casino in Las Vegas cut costs by putting sprinklers in some areas of their hotel, but not putting sprinklers in the casino.

Why? Because it was not required by the building code. But, of course, it was bound to happen, there was a fire in the casino. 86 people lost their lives. Over 700 people injured.

The courts litigated whether or not there was any fault legally. But it does not take any imagination to

realize that there are architects and construction companies and low bidders and high bidders and decision makers, who for the rest of their lives, will be unable to forget that casino tragedy due to a lack of sprinklers. Again and again, they will say to themselves, “Why didn’t we spend the extra money for safety?” For the rest of their lives, they will regret their decision.

You know what regret is? It’s beholding heaven and feeling hell. Since regrets form so much of our lives, does it occur to us whether or not God can regret?

Most of us never think of that because we say that God knows everything that’s going to happen in advance. God knows everything is going to turn out all right; therefore, God never regrets.

That is a lie. According to God’s own Word, God does regret. God regrets with the same anguish and heartbreak that we feel with our regrets. God feels regret the same as us.

Are you aware that there is a place in the Bible that tells us God regretted creating humans? That God decided God would destroy all of creation? God looked upon the earth and saw only one person who was faithful. The one person God did not want to destroy was Noah.

The rest of the earth God did destroy. God was driven by regret. God started creation all over again, beginning with Noah.

Or another example of regret in the Bible: God took a people who were no people and made them to be God's people, the Hebrews. Are you aware than when God led them out of slavery in Egypt into the wilderness, right up to the Promised Land, that in the wilderness, time and time and time and time again, they complained. The Bible says they regretted following God, even regretted being freed from slavery.

Remember when these regretters built a golden calf? They said, "This golden calf will lead us back into slavery, back into the familiar

territory of Egypt. We'll follow the golden calf.”

It was at this point God said to Moses, “I will destroy these people, my chosen people, the people I brought into being. I will destroy them and blot them out from the face of the earth. I regret ever creating them. This is the desire of my heart,” God said.

Fortunately, Moses persuaded God against destroying God's people. And though God regretted their infidelity, regretted their rebellion, regretted their inconsistencies, even regretted their contempt, God permitted the Hebrews to live.

It drives theologians crazy. It blows a lot of their pet theories about God out of the water. God regrets? Impossible, they say.

I wonder how they would explain this Gospel reading today. Jesus cried out with regret. His greatest regret was that he would have them, but they would not have him.

We always have this impression that God can't do with us.

God can do without any one of us...or all of us. God is not dependent on us. We are dependent on God.

Human beings have always regretted God. We don't talk about it because it is considered sacrilegious. You won't find any big spiritual book on the subject, you may not find a lot of people discussing it, but it is a fact of life.

Why do you think when Noah preached righteousness, people chose evil?

Why did Israel grumble and complain, even as Moses was leading them to promised land?

Why did Jesus feel regret for Jerusalem, lamenting for them all?

Why? Because we regret God's standard of righteousness. We regret that God's ways are not their ways.

When we describe God as rigid, it means we want God loose and permissive like us. We very much regret that God leads us toward the cross instead of leading us to our desires, to our sense of fulfillment. God promises to lead us to the cross. And we regret it.

I'd like to ask you this, as we begin another Lenten season: What is it in your life that you most regret about God? That you haven't dealt with God? That you don't have a solid, ongoing relationship with Jesus? That you aren't more involved in the work of the church? That you have disappointed God?

Then let me ask you just one more question: Do you think Jesus regrets you? Jesus, crucified, dead, buried, endured hell, presented his body on the cross and who, while even on the cross, asked God to forgive you. Do you think Jesus regrets you?

There is something you can do with regret. If your regret is real, then you have tomorrow. Yes, listen, if you take your regrets to

Jesus, you have a tomorrow.
Because your citizenship is in
heaven. Your humiliation will be
transformed into glory.

What you do regret, do you regret
it enough to stop it? Great, stop it!

What you do regret that you have
not been doing, do you regret it
enough to start doing it? Great,
start it!

The beauty of Christ is not in
yesterday, but in today and
tomorrow.

Stand firm. With confidence.
With faith.

Bring your regrets to Jesus. He
knows a thing or two about regret.
He will gather you as a mother hen
gathers her chick.

You have a tomorrow. Life in
Christ does not have room for
yesterdays and regrets.

When you can think of yesterday
without regret and think of
tomorrow without fear, that is
faithful living!

Blessings to you. Amen.