**Sermon:** **God’s Promises, Go: Got to Catch Them All!**

**By Rev. Sheryl Stewart**

Genesis 15:1-6 Hebrews 11: 1-3, 8-16 Luke 12: 32-34

**Responsive Reading**: Psalm 33: 12-22

God’s promise seemed impossible, but Abraham trusted God and God, seeing this, graded his life as perfect. It wasn’t that Abraham was so good. His life has as many mistakes as you and I, some of them whoppers. Yet, because he had faith in God’s Word, when that Word became flesh, Jesus’ death on the Cross applied to him. So, Abraham didn’t catch just one promise from God, but all of them with one act of faith in what he could not see. This may be why Jesus always said, “Your faith has made you whole,” even when God’s love did that. Faith is the key that unlocks everything.

I see so many answered promises here! All around me is the beauty of Creation. I see my friends, my church family. Though, I do not see it, I feel love going from me and coming to me. I especially feel the joy of worship and song and look forward to Communion. I love my country, though I fear for its future. I treasure all of these, but none of them is really my treasure. In all these things, I still seek and am a stranger and a refugee among other strangers and refugees trusting in a better place and time to come.

 I’ve told this story for some years, but last Pentecost Sunday, God gave it a new ending; so, I want to share it with you.

 It all started for me when I really heard “Take up your cross, and follow me. So, when I decided to follow Jesus, God Gave me a cross **[mime reception].**

 Woah! Man, this cross is heavy! Unhh! Erk! It’ll take me years to follow Jesus lugging this around. Well, I’ll just get my saw out and give it a little trim **[mime].**

 OK, that’s easier to handle **[mime two handed carry]**. Let me just follow Jesus now. **[Mime walk].**

 Hey, look at that store: free samples! Man, look at all that food, and what are they drinking in there? Where is all that funky smoke coming from? What brand are those weird cigarettes anyway **[mime attempt to get in but cross will not fit through the door]**?

 This cross won’t fit through the door. Well, I’ll just saw off a bit more **[mime trim to one hand carry and enter]**. “Woah, that salty food makes me bloated and sick, those drinks make me dizzy, and that smoke makes me really confused and stupid. Jesus is nowhere in here, either; I better move on **[mime exit]**. I better go uptown **[mime walk**].

Woah, look at that cool dance club. Man, they are having fun! And – woohoo -- would you look at that cute guy! Boy, God had a good day when he made that face! He has some excellent moves! I wonder what those hands would feel like in a slow dance **[mime entry and dance]**.

Hum, why are they all looking at me funny? How come he isn’t dancing with me? Hey, I’m the only one here with a cross! Well I don’t need the saw for this. I’ll just use my whittling knife **[mime whittle to tiny pocket size, tuck it in bra, and dance]**.

That guy is one good dancer, and the slow dances are exciting, but he doesn’t know Jesus. When I talk to him about God, he doesn’t want to know Him. And those slow dances: we both want to lead! He won’t follow me where I need to go, and when I follow him, I end up where I don’t want to be.

“You know, boy-o; if I stay uptown with you, you’re just going **to funk me up!** I’m going back to find Jesus; come or stay as you like **[mime exit].**

Finally, I reached the end of my journey. Ahead, were the towers of Heaven and there, standing in welcome front of an open door, was Jesus. But, between me and Jesus was a deep, wide chasm with smoke rising from it. ”Jesus,” I yelled, “how do I get over to you?”

“Use your cross,” Jesus replied. “That’s your bridge! Come on over, we have a banquet ready for you!”

**[Mime looking at the teensy cross hidden in my bra and casting it into the pit]**

“Help!” -- Here is where my story usually ended: a warning not to whittle down our crosses, but Jesus had another idea.

“Help,” I said. “Jesus, I whittled down my cross when it was too heavy and I was too weak, too lazy, and too impatient. I whittled it down more when it wouldn’t fit to get me into a place you’d never go that just made me sick. Then, I really whittled it down and hid it when people were looking at me funny and I cared more about their opinion than what you thought of me. It just fell into that river of fire, and my cross will never get me to you.”

Jesus looked at me and said: “I know, but I never whittled anything off my Cross. I used it to cross the gap to Heaven, opened the door and I’m here for you. Do you believe God loves you anyway and I’m the one God sent to bring you home?”

“I do.”

Jesus nodded, I do, too.” Then he spread his arms out, and breathed out a mighty breath. “Receive the Holy Spirit,” He said. The smoke from the pit blew away and I could see the outline of a mighty cross, three feet wide and twenty-five feet long, solidly fixed on either end of the deep chasm.

“Look at me,” Jesus called out. “Don’t look down; just come to me.”

**[Mime approach]**

When I embraced Him, I was close enough to hear music coming out of the open door of Heaven **[hum, Wedding March]**”This party,” I asked, “It’s more than welcoming a Prodigal, isn’t it?”

Jesus smiled: “You remember what you said when I asked you if you believe God loves you and sent me for you? “

“I do”

 I do, too. You are my church, you know what my church is to me in Heaven, don’t you?”

 “It’s our wedding day, isn’t it?”

 “Yes, wait till you see the reception. You liked lobster on Earth? Wait till you taste baked Leviathan! And the steaks: holy cow! There is strawberry shortcake, double-fudge brownies, bread, wine… what would you like first?

 “Our wedding dance. You know, on Earth I always had trouble wanting to lead. Here, I don’t think there’ll be any problem **[mime dance entry]**. What happens next, only God knows now, but I will, and so will you**. [Kiss**].

 My treasure is where my heart is and my heart is with Jesus. If it is the same for you, I won’t miss any of the other treasures I spoke of because we will be in the same place forever. I see you now; I’ll see you there. Amen.