

*Exodus 19:2-8*  
*4<sup>th</sup> Sunday after Pentecost*  
*July 10<sup>th</sup>, 2011*  
*Pastor Joel T. Sauer*  
*Year A*

**Carried on Eagles' Wings**

In the name of the Father, and of the Son † and of the Holy Spirit. Amen.

Scripture's lesson for our meditation this morning is taken from the first lesson read for today, from the book of Exodus, chapter 19, beginning at the 2<sup>nd</sup> verse. Permit me to read just one verse again:

The Lord said - 4 'You yourselves have seen what I did to Egypt, and how I carried you on eagles' wings and brought you to myself.

This is the Word of God!

Dear Christian Friends,

The United States uses the symbol of an eagle on its currency or even atop the flag that you see here in church. Why is that? If Ben Franklin had his way, the national symbol would have been the turkey? So why did the eagle finally win out in representing the United States?

It is said the eagle is used because, at one of the first battles of the Revolution War (which occurred early in the morning) the noise of the struggle awoke some sleeping eagles who flew from their nests and circled over the heads of the fighting men, all the while screeching for having been disturbed. "They are shrieking for Freedom," said the patriots. And so, the eagle, full of the boundless spirit of freedom, living above the valleys, strong and powerful in his might, became the national symbol.

In the lesson before us this morning, the Lord speaks to His people, the Israelites, and describes Himself as an Eagle – strong and powerful, carrying them to freedom. But He was not only speaking to the Israelites of that day, but also to us this morning, for **we are carried on Eagles' wings**. To where are we carried? That is what we will see in the lesson before us. With that in mind, may the Holy Spirit bless our study of His Word and lead us to focus on what our Lord has done for us through our Savior, Jesus Christ. Let's go to our lesson.

Our lesson takes us back to the time in the Old Testament when the Israelites had been rescued from slavery in the land of Egypt. They traveled through the wilderness, camping in one place, breaking camp, traveling again, camping there, breaking camp and traveling again until they set up camp at the foot of Mt. Sinai.

It was there at Mt. Sinai, that Moses ascended to hear the Word of the Lord. The Lord said, "**This is what you are to say to the house of Jacob and what you are to tell the**

**people of Israel: 4 ‘You yourselves have seen what I did to Egypt, and how I carried you on eagles’ wings and brought you to myself.’**

The Lord begins by reminding Moses what He had done for the Israelites. When the Israelites were toiling away in slavery in Egypt, the Lord grasped them in His hands to rescue them. When the Israelites were trembling in fear, as they stood on the shores of the Red Sea wondering if they would die in the desert as the Egyptian army pressed down upon them, the Lord carried them safely through the waters of the Red Sea to the other side. On the powerful wings of the Lord, they were brought securely to the base of Mt. Sinai, where they were about to hear the commands of the Lord. It was on this mountain that Moses would receive the 10 commandments.

God continues in our lesson - **“5 Now if you obey me fully and keep my covenant, then out of all nations you will be my treasured possession. Although the whole earth is mine, 6 you will be for me a kingdom of priests and a holy nation.’ These are the words you are to speak to the Israelites.”** The Israelites were to follow God’s commands. If they would do this then they would be His people, His possession from among all the peoples of the world. They would be a nation chosen from the nations of the world to be holy and would be priests, serving God!

Moses must have been excited to bring these words down from the mountain to the people of Israel. He faithfully told them all that the Lord had said. And the Israelites were overjoyed. They did indeed remember what the Lord had done for them in Egypt. They did indeed remember that God had, throughout the wilderness, carried them on eagles’ wings and they responded, **“We will do everything the LORD has said.”**

Yet how quickly they forgot this promise! Shortly after, as Moses went up the mountain again to receive the 10 commandments of the Lord, the people grumbled and complained against God. How quickly they turned from the Lord and looked to worship and follow another – an idol, a golden calf made with their own hands. They declared they would do everything the Lord said, but then went against the very first commandment given – You shall have no other gods! They promised to follow Him, but they failed.

If we look into the mirror, we will see that we have acted just like the Israelites in our lesson. We promise to follow God and do everything He has said, but then find ourselves not even able to keep perfectly the very first commandment! We promise to do better in following God, we promise not to get angry with our families, we promise to not fall to temptation again – but what happens? We fail. What do we deserve because of our failures? We deserve punishment.

How are we going to wiggle out of this punishment? Are we going to try harder to keep His commandments? Are we to do something making up for what we have done wrong? That still doesn’t erase our sins against God, does it? If we stay at the foot of Mt. Sinai, thinking that if we only do better, then God will erase our punishment, we will soon be thrown into despair because we are sinful.

But the Lord would not have us stay at the foot of that mountain. He, like an eagle, swoops down to lift us up and carry us to another mountain - a mountain where death is turned to life; a mountain where all the demands of God have been kept for us; a mountain where our failures, our sins, are taken away; a mountain where our despair is turned to joy. What mountain is this? We are carried on the powerful wings of our Lord from Mt. Sinai to Mt. Calvary where Christ died upon the cross for us.

It is there at Mt. Calvary, where those demands of God, to keep His commands perfectly, were kept by the Savior in your place. Those sins, which no matter what you did you could not erase, were placed on Jesus and died, no longer to condemn you. It is at the cross where you see Christ grasping a hold of you and never letting go. He is the One who calls you His own. He is the One who carries you to Himself.

Our life is wrapped up between these two mountains – Mt. Sinai and Mt. Calvary. We strive to live our lives for God, to follow the 10 commandments, but when we fail, we must be carried again to the cross to be cleansed with Jesus' blood. How is this done? We are carried again and again to the cross, to Mt. Calvary on the wings of the Lord by the words spoken after our confession, by the Lord's Supper, by remembering our baptism. Through these means, the Lord promises you forgiveness. Through these means, the Lord grasps you like an eagle so that nothing can snatch you out of His hands. Through these means the Lord gives you the gift of Heaven. Through these means the Lord works in you to live for Him!

What does this all mean for you today? Do you worry that God won't forgive you for that one sin in your past? Be carried on eagles' wings to the cross. Do you find it hard to love your neighbor? Do you find yourself not living as God would have you live? Be carried on eagles' wings to the cross. Do you struggle with temptation? Do you fear that God has forgotten you? Be carried on eagles' wings to the cross. For at the cross Christ brings you to Himself and gives you peace – peace for your troubled soul and peace from the troubles in your life.

As you go out the doors today and live your lives, may you focus on Mt. Calvary and the cross of Christ! As you go, know that forgiveness is yours. As you go, know that He is the One who responded to the Lord and said with His life and death – “I have done everything the LORD has said.” As you go, may the words of the Hymn we just sang be your prayer:

Seek where you may to find a way  
That leads to your salvation  
My heart is stilled; on Christ I build  
He is the one foundation.  
His Word is sure; His works endure.  
He will o'erthrow My every foe;  
Through Him I more than conquer. CW 395:1

Yes, you are carried on Eagles' wings – carried through this life by your Savior Jesus!

In His Name!  
Amen.

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