



feeding ... gathering ... carrying ... leading. (Isaiah 40:11)

October 8, 2014

Dearest family,

When I'm teaching, I usually go into the pulpit with about 20 pages of notes. On Sunday, I had 9 pages so it hopefully was shorter than usual!! However, with all the wonderful things that went on during the service, I'm sure you didn't get out early. In the second message of the Jude series I focused on the first of three points on verses 1-4: AN ASSAULT. Last Sunday, I briefly covered the other two points: an appeal and an assurance. Working backwards from the nature of the virulent assault (v4), we can understand the intensity of Jude's appeal (v3), and working backwards from that appeal, we can now understand why he begins with such a strong word of assurance. (vs 1-2)

We noted the intensity and urgency of Jude's appeal, and hopefully took the example of Jude's earnest exhortation to heart. Are we diligent or negligent? Are we resolute or dilute. Is it about responding today, or procrastinating till tomorrow? I cited over thirty different scriptural passages that reveal the strong affections and diligent attitudes that accompany discipleship. Then we looked at one of Jude's characteristic three-pointers: called, loved, kept. Here is the assurance that grounds all that follows.

“to those who have been called...”

This is such a repeated NT assurance. This is not the kind of call that randomly shouts, “Hey you!” Behind this call is the idea of choice. You have been wanted, desired. That's hard to receive if you battle rejection. Paul lays this same foundation of assurance at the beginning of his letter to the Romans. His confidence in even addressing them is because he is “*called to be an apostle*” (1:1) He describes Christians as “*those who are called to belong to Jesus.*” (1:6) The word that Jude uses here has three senses all wrapped up in it. It is a call to responsibility, as in a job offer. It is a call to a party, an invitation to joy. It is the word used when you are called to trial, to give an account of yourself, a call to judgment. So to summarize, it is a call to service, a call to scrutiny, but a call to celebration. We know who we are because we know whose we are. You will usually find that when you suffer self-doubt or lack of personal assurance, it is rooted in insecurity about who you really are in Christ and what Jesus really thinks and feel for you. There is assurance in this call because of what we know about it:

- it is a hope-filled call (Ephs. 4:4) “*called to one hope*”
- it is a high calling (Phils. 3:14) “*I press toward the mark for the prize of the high calling...*”
- it is a heavenly call (Hens.3:1) “*who share in the heavenly calling*”
- it is a holy call (2Tim. 1:9) “*God...has...called us to a holy life...*”

Has this call of grace taken your breath away? You're called! The call is to Christ, the call is to the Father. That's closeness, that's safety, that's relationship. Paul is writing to the Thessalonians who are embattled and besieged on every side, a bit like Jude's readers. Listen to him: “*Brothers, loved by the Lord...from the beginning God chose you...He called you to this through our gospel that you might share in the glory of our Lord Jesus Christ. So then stand firm and hold on to the teachings we passed on to you.*” (2 Thess. 2:13-15) Do you hear the similarity to Jude?

- “*God has called you into fellowship with His Son Jesus...*” ((1 Cor. 1: 8-9) But right before that, because of this call, he could say, “*He will keep you strong to the end, so that you will be blameless on the day of Jesus Christ.*” Exactly what Jude is saying!
- “*Those who are called may receive the promised inheritance.*” (Hebrs. 9:15) How assuring is that?

You are not a floater. You are not on the fringe? You are not on probation till you can prove that you are worth his choice of you? You are not the kid who was always picked last, or never picked at all? You are the most popular with your Father God. He called you! That means you are on His side. You will never be separated. Blessed assurance!

“loved in God the Father...”

I spent a whole year about two years ago, teaching on the heart and the love of the Father. Are you still unconvinced that God will leave his stoop to run toward you? Do fathers and mothers forsake us? Yes. Do friends and lovers forsake us? Yes. Yet at our most unloveable He loves us. He’s not checking out the photo albums of our unloveableness. While I was an enemy he loved me. What assurance in the surety of His love for me. The entire record of scripture records this avalanche of the love of God – unmerited of course but lavished anyway. “*Herein is love, not that we loved God but that He loved us and sent His son to be the propitiation for our sins.*” (1 Jn. 4:10) Jesus’ passionate prayer for us in Jn. 17:22-23 was that we would know that the Father loved us in the same way that He loved Jesus. Jesus uses the perfect tense which means we are the permanent objects of His love. You want assurance, given your experience of fickle and faithless and philandering love? His love is EVERLASTING! “*I have loved you with an everlasting love; I have drawn you with loving-kindness.*” (Jer. 31: 3-4) It is UNFAILING! “*I will not forget you...I have engraved you on the palm of my hands!*” Your name is God’s tattoo! You worry it will not be enough for you? It is GREAT! “*Because of His great love for you, God who is rich in mercy...*” (Ephs. 2:4-5) You stay unassured because you are overwhelmed by your lack of worth, by your unloveability? His love is UNCONDITIONAL! “*While we were still sinners Christ died for us!*” (Roms. 5:8) His love has been demonstrated in our salvation, in our adoption: “*When the kindness and love of God our Savior appeared, he saved us...How great is the love the Father has lavished on us that we should be called the children of God!*” What kind of love do you need to give you assurance? He has assured you that he loves you as a Father (Hebrs. 12: 9-10); he has assured you that he loves you as a mother (Isa. 66:13); he has assured you he loves you as a spouse (Isa. 62:5) And when we are in Christ, He cannot love us less than He loves Jesus! Darling, be assured, he loves you: personally, passionately and permanently. Blessed assurance!

“kept for Jesus Christ...”

There’s hardly an epistle that doesn’t begin with an affirmation of the secure keeping power of God. Kept by his call (Roms. 1:1); kept by his will ((1Cor. 1:1); kept by his comfort (1 Cor. 1:3); kept by his delivering power (Gals. 1:4); kept by our adoption (Ephs. 1:5) and on and on. This keeping power of God dominated the teaching of Jesus: “*No one can snatch them from my Father’s hand.*” (Jn. 10:28-31) It dominated the teaching of Paul: “*The Lord will rescue me from every evil attack and will bring me safely to his heavenly kingdom.*” (2 Tim. 4:18) This keeping power of God dominates the prayers of Jesus: “*Holy Father, protect them by the power of your name.*” (Jn. 17:11) It dominated the prayers of Paul: “*May your whole spirit, soul and body, be kept blameless at the coming of our Lord Jesus Christ. The one who calls you is faithful and will do it!*” (1 Thess. 5:23) Kept from sin, kept from temptation, kept from persecution and in it, kept from youth to old age, kept in death.

The clarion cry of Jude has rung through the centuries of church life as a doxology: “*Now unto Him who is able to keep...(v24) He is able to keep that which I have committed to Him against that day...*” (2 Tim. 1:12) Blessed assurance!

But of course this assurance is not a one sided affair. As sure as it is we do not presume on it and therefore despise or disparage it.

- Yes you are called. *“Be all the more eager to make your calling...sure... make every effort to add to your faith...”* (2 Pet. 1:10)
- Yes you are loved. *“Keep yourselves in God’s love.”* (Jude v21)
- Yes you are kept. *“You keep your spiritual fervor”* (Roms. 12:11) *“You keep in step with the Spirit.”* (Gals. 5:25) *“You keep yourself pure.”* (1 Tim. 5:22) *“You keep your lives free from the love of money.”* (Hebrs. 13:5) *“You keep yourselves from being polluted by the world.”* (Jms. 1:27)

This relational reciprocity is all the way through Jude. As for love, as we have seen, keep yourselves in the love of God. As for peace, you pray in the Spirit. As for mercy, you look for the mercy of our Lord Jesus Christ. If we receive the assurance, we can respond to the appeal and we can resist the assault.

I’m so glad you could share communion on Sunday. Is there any example like Jesus for what I was talking about? Was there another as diligent, whose words as an obedient servant were pre-heard by Isaiah (50:7) *“I set my face like a flint.”* Was there any more vigilant: *“Could you not watch with me?”* Was there any who agonized more? Whether in the wilderness in his bearing the onslaught of Satan, or whether in Gethsemane: *“And being in an agony he prayed more earnestly and his sweat was like drops of blood falling to the ground.”* (Lk. 22:44) Did he not pioneer for us everything that Jude seems to be asking of us. Was his assurance not the call of the Father: *“He will be called the Son of the Most High...”* (Lk. 1:32) Was not his assurance the love of the Father? *“You are my Son whom I love.”* (Lk. 3:22). Was not his assurance the keeping power of the Father? *“You would have no power over me if it were not given to you from above...Father, into your hands I commit my Spirit.”* (Jn. 19:11; Lk. 23:46) Blessed assurance!

Jesus was assured about whose He was, and who He was. The Pharisees were the enemies of grace and the deniers of the lordship of Jesus the Messiah. No one warned against the challenges to faith in Jesus more than Jesus himself, but no one was a surer example of how to endure the assault of false teaching, and how to triumph over it. As Peter said, He left us an example so that we could follow in his footsteps.

Pastorally yours,
Stuart