

SERMON
First Lutheran Church
Aitkin, Minnesota

Deuteronomy 5:1-21; 6:4-9
Rev. Darrell J. Pedersen
October 11, 2015

ADULT MESSAGE

The photo that you are looking at shows a medical transport helicopter parked outside Riverwood Hospital on Friday afternoon. It was waiting to transport **Neil Busse**. Neil had a heart attack and needed to receive care beyond what physicians and technology at Riverwood could offer. Neil needed to be cared for by heart specialists.

God is a heart specialist. From the beginning of time and until the end of eternity, God is **the heart specialist**. During recent weeks in worship, we have begun a journey through **God's love letter to humanity**. We have been reminded that God created us and all that exists. God made us for a loving, life-giving relationship with God, neighbor and creation. God promised to love and care for us forever. **Adam and Eve didn't believe it.** They thought they could take care of themselves. That's when God's amazing creation, humans, began to suffer. But God didn't give up on them. God continued to faithfully pursue, love and care for them. **God was looking for their hearts.**

Next God called **Abraham and Sarah, Isaac and Jacob** to be the start of God's new people. God covenanted to love and bless these **ordinary humans** so that, through them, God could bring love and blessing to every person in the world.

In today's text from **Deuteronomy 5 and 6**, we are reminded that God's people, the Israelites, had ended up as **slaves in Egypt**. You heard what happened. God **knew** of their suffering. God **heard** their cries for help. Then God **moved to rescue them** from their slavery using **very human Moses**. God still does that sort of thing today. **Neil Busse** went into Riverwood Hospital with a deadly case of pneumonia and other complications. He was sedated and placed into intensive care. I watched as his nurse worked to draw a blood sample. In visiting with

Neil's family, fellow members of First Lutheran, she shared that she had **prayed** before starting her attempt. On my way out of the emergency ward, Bible in hand, I stopped and spoke to Neil's doctor, "Thank you for your work."

Fully aware of Neil's critical condition, the doctor responded, "**It is hard.**"

"Yes," I said.

He went on, "**We get direction.**"

That's how God works. As Lutheran Christians, we believe that God moves mightily through the gifts and talents that God has given to doctors, nurses, cleaning people, food service... And now Neil was heading for **St. Mary's Hospital** in Duluth, started and run by our neighbors in the faith, the Roman Catholics. A **heart place**. A **healing place**. **God's work**. **Our hands**.

Neil had his heart attack Friday afternoon. It became a matter of life and death that Neil be transported to those heart specialists with their advanced life-saving tools. I've been with **Neil and Shirley** in the hospital on other occasions. I have visited in their home. Neil and Shirley Busse are people of faith. They are convinced that it is God who got them through the **unsolved murder of their son** twenty years ago. They are convinced that it is God who **loves and cares for them through this faith family** right now. And they are convinced that it is God who has **called them into the Lutheran Social Service Foster Grandparents program** where they work to love and care for children at Rippleside Elementary School. As Neil lay unconscious in that E.R. bed, they were convinced that it is **God who will see them safely through this crisis as well** – whether Neil rallies and returns home to Shirley or Neil leaves this world in the arms of Jesus. God is faithful and the Busses believe it.

What a difference it makes. When you are experiencing:

- A breath-taking sunrise, a peaceful moon , a bright red maple in the fall, fresh vegetables from your garden or a caring call from a friend – to know deep down in your heart that these are **all gifted to you by the heart specialist – Jesus**.

What a difference it makes. When you are experiencing:

- Your first date, your wedding day, the birth of your child, their baptism or Two Year Old or Third Grade Milestone, or the birth of a grandchild – to know deep down in your heart that and they are being **lovingly cared for by the heart specialist – Jesus.**

What a difference it makes. When you are faced with:

- Financial ruin, broken relationship, chemical dependency, depression, life threatening illness, even death – to know deep down in your heart that you are being **lovingly cared for by the heart specialist – Jesus.**

In our text for today, we hear about God’s gift of the **Ten Commandments**. God has, using Moses, **rescued** the Israelites from slavery in Egypt. God is leading them toward the **Promised Land** where they will be able to dwell in peace and prosperity. Now they stop along the way and God gifts them with a **new covenant, promise, agreement**. First God speaks, **“I am the Lord your God...”** Here God literally commits Godself to their life and wellbeing. God gives Godself to them for whatever the future holds. Before God asks a single thing of God’s people, God commits Godself to them. We hear this promise three times in this short passage of scripture. With this in mind, the Ten Commandments come less as **laws with consequences** and far more as **gifts from God for the good of all the people**. The heart specialist, God, gives God’s beloved people an outline for living together in relationship where all can be blessed.

The **first three commandments** spell out the foundational importance of humans committing their lives into the hands of a loving God. The **last seven commandments** lay out the best way for us to live healthy and to love and care for the neighbor and creation. God seals the deal with humans by saying, **“You shall love the Lord your God with all your heart, and with all your soul, and with all your might.”** Jesus, in the New Testament quotes this greatest commandment and adds, **“The second is this, ‘You shall love your neighbor as yourself.’”** (Mark 12:31.) Do you see? **God, the heart specialist, builds this whole amazing world and all of our lives** around us being in a **love/trust relationship with God, each other and God’s precious creation**. Now as they were about to enter the Promised Land of God’s love and blessing, God once again claims them as God’s

precious people. And, you and I are kin to these folks. **Children of God. And what a difference that makes in our everyday and eternal lives.**

Do you see? The Ten Commandments aren't about how good we need to be. They are about how good the heart specialist is. They are about us living in a love/trust relationship with God and with God's precious creation and people.

We are created by God. Gifted by God. Loved by God. Cared for by God. In our own places of bondage, in our own wilderness wanderings, in our own need for rescue, day by day:

- God knows our pain.
- God listens for our cries of help.
- God comes to rescue us.

And you and me, we're a part of God's rescue plan:

- Either as **recipients** that **God comes to help,**
- Or as ordinary human **used by God** to **help others.**

Maybe God's going to use you as a nurse at Riverwood Hospital, or as a foster grandparent at Rippleside Elementary School, or as a hotdish bringer, or as a nursing home visitor, or as a Habitat Home builder, or as a faithful prayer for the little ones, or as a Godparent, or as a Sunday school teacher, or as a confirmation mentor, or as a ride-sharer, or ...

If the day comes when the medical transport is waiting for you, **you may think that you are boarding alone. But God will be there. How much better to know the heart specialist, Jesus, before you get to that place.** Jesus knows, loves and cares about you. **God has dwelt in your heart since baptism. Jesus, the heart specialist, is here for you.** Today. Every day. Forever. Come what may. **Trust Jesus every day** and you will be **set free to live life as the amazing God-given gift that it is.** Thanks be to God. Amen.