



Calvary Presbyterian Church  
Sunday, May 7, 2023

## LOVE WITH SKIN ON: Sanctuary for our Souls

Pastor Eyde Mabanglo

Probably no surprise to you all, but I need knee surgery...the doctor said that my knee was officially SHOT. He said that was the medical term. And I just got a new travel cane.

I've been using a cane off and on for almost a year, so I should not be surprised that I've waited too long. I know the recovery will take several weeks because I've had surgery before.

Several years ago, I had to have foot surgery on my left foot. And I was able to use a scooter to get around the church. It was so fun. I remember standing with the scooter as I assisted in leading worship one Sunday morning. And I was trying to convey to those in worship that as we walk our spiritual journeys beside Christ and beside others that the posture of a faithful disciple is always to kneel. So, I walked with one foot slowly down the aisle while I also remained kneeled on my other leg...As I told them that walking with Christ also required kneeling, I was walking and kneeling at the same time.

I want you to imagine your own soul...walking with Christ all the time...I want you to imagine your own soul kneeling at God's feet all the time—committing to a journey of being the hands and feet and heart and mind of Christ in this life...**Love With Skin On** (current sermon series)...while also committing your Spirit daily to the One who created you, knows you, listens to you, and loves you.

Discipleship is walking. Discipleship is kneeling.  
Discipleship is walking with others as walk with God. Kneeling with others as with God.

This is the mind of the psalmist that wrote today's psalm, song, prayer.

The writer shares their heart's desire to find refuge, AND to find that refuge in the sacred and protected space of God's own heart.

SCRIPTURE Psalm 31:1-5, 15-16 (The Voice Translation)

For the worship leader. A song of David.

<sup>1</sup>You are my shelter, O Eternal One—*my soul's sanctuary!*

Shield me from shame; rescue me by Your righteousness.

<sup>2</sup>*Hear me, Lord!* Turn Your ear in my direction. Come quick! Save me! Be my rock, my shelter, my fortress of salvation!

<sup>3</sup>You are my rock and my fortress—*my soul's sanctuary!* Therefore, for the sake of Your reputation, be my leader, my guide, *my navigator, my commander.*

<sup>4</sup>Save me from the snare that has been secretly set out for me, for You are my protection.

<sup>5</sup>I entrust my spirit into Your hands. You have redeemed me, O Eternal, God of *faithfulness and truth.*

Psalm 31:15-16

<sup>15</sup>I give the moments of my life over to You, *Eternal One.* Rescue me from those who hate me and who hound me *with their threats.* <sup>16</sup>*Look toward me, and let Your face shine down upon Your servant. Because of Your gracious love, save me!*

AND A BRIEF READING FROM TODAY'S GOSPEL:

<sup>2</sup>*My Father's house has many rooms; if that were not so, would I have told you that I am going there to prepare a place for you?* <sup>3</sup>*And if I go and prepare a place for you, I will come back and take you to be with me that you also may be where I am. (John 14)*

My reflections on Psalm 31, itself a prayer, are written in the form of a prayer this morning. A prayer on behalf of my soul seeking sanctuary. A prayer on behalf of creation from Eden to forever.

God you are sanctuary...let us count the ways.

We imagine your heart filled with chamber after chamber as hearts are... Prepared for us in advance to reside, abide, and dwell in your residence, your abode, your dwelling place...not a physical place, but a sacred space to live forever with the one who has known us forever.

You are sanctuary because we are free to be our truest selves inside your heart.

We are protected and guarded and insulated not only from the threats of the world, but of the threats of our own mind and hearts and souls in the broken ways they have been influenced by this world (self-protection, self-preservation, self-promotion are not your ways...let us find cleansing, redeeming, liberating ways of being as we make your heart our dwelling place even now, even today...

As we sit inside this building called Calvary, this place of worship today and as some of us participate in worship in their own homes, may we all realize that you oh Lord is and always will be our truest place of worship. And as we have gathered at a particular hour this morning (and some in different time zones) may we be ever mindful that it is indeed every hour that is your chosen hour for worship for us your beloved.

May our prayers never cease. May our hearts be always tuned to yours as our prayers ask you to turn your ear to us. May we make every space of our lives sacred space. May we investigate every face and see yours shining back at us to teach, to bless, to reveal, to forgive, to transform...us into the people you have created us to be.

As we imagine the sanctuary that is your heart and your essence, we can hear our fellow human siblings joining their cascading voices to sing the words of this psalm. We hear a layer of vocalists sing--Into your hands I place my life. We recognize the words from the last of the last words that

you spoke from the cross. In seeking strength and courage and resurrection power, you committed yourself to the fortress of grace, the stronghold of love, and an ultimate trust in the One who brings life from death...always. And then we hear another wave of singers proclaim your steadfast, unfailing love that knows no end. Your heart, our sanctuary for our souls, is filled with sweet voices offering an antiphonal echo of our commitment to you and your devotion to us. Then a third layer of voices simply sings a bellowing refrain that says: *my life is yours*. It is a powerful melodic theme that sounds like your voice and ours harmonizing. *My life is yours*, says your Spirit, and, *My life is yours* is sung back to you from our own communal Spirit—to us, all of us, your creation, your beloved.

The echoes and refrains and the harmonies come together like the words of this psalm because some prayers just need to be repeated and some songs just need to go on forever.

When we reside and abide and dwell in this space, we need not look any further for refuge or comfort or protection. There is safety in this sacred space. There is safety in the relationship. Our name is safe in your mouth. Our hearts are safe from harm. Our minds are safe from distraction and deceit.

We have been rescued and delivered and liberated. And as we think about life on this side of eternity as we walk this path with our feet and as we kneel at your feet, we know that we are called to ensure safe places for those we love, for those who have only known unsafe places, for those who don't have a say in what kind of places they must work or live or raise their families.

As we reflect on what you have prepared for us now and not yet, we understand that we have been called to invite others into safe places...ultimately, as we learn to trust you, we can trust your liberating ways in this life as we hope for the next. We can put our trust in the stronghold of your resurrection-power and know that you want to bless all our human siblings, and especially those who have not always enjoyed safe places.

We think of how sometimes we feel that there is safety in numbers. Yet it is often places of gatherings, like schools, churches, medical buildings and

malls, that become targets of violence. Help us be mindful of the cries of our hearts for refuge and sanctuary for our children, our neighbors, ourselves.

We know that you intend for us to know sanctuary for our souls, but that you have called us to also ensure sanctuary for the minds and bodies of others as well.

We know that many are calling out your name, asking for refuge, praying for deliverance, pleading for help. As we place our future in your hands and commit our lives to you, show us how we can be a part of inviting others into that same safety.

Our future is in your hands. Our future (our families, our neighbors, our loved ones, our communities). We throw ourselves on you for you are our refuge, our strength, our hope. Like the psalmist we ask that your face would shine on all of us—that you would warm us with your smile—that you would save us in your steadfast, gracious, and unfailing love. As you continue to prepare our chambers in your heart. Prepare us too to invite all who seek refuge to come with us on a path of walking with you and kneeling before you.

You, O Christ are the sanctuary of our soul. You, O Christ are our place of worship.

And your table O Christ is set before us.

And your table O Christ is a safe place for us to bring ourselves—no matter our situation, no matter our circumstance.

Your table O Christ is where we kneel and ask that you would help us be the people that you called us to be.

At your table, we hear you say My life is Yours.

AND, at your table, we offer our lives back to you. Our life is yours.

May it be so. May it be so.

