

## Second Sunday in Lent: Choose to be loved and to love

Readings: Genesis 15:1-12, 17-18, Psalm 27, Philippians 3:17-4:1

Gospel: Luke 13:31-35. Alternative reading for the Transfiguration also included.

### Focus

Eden – Hope for the Hungry Mind. This is a story about how a vision to help a local community, through establishing a library, has a profound impact on the life of one African family.

It is commonly understood that education is the pathway out of poverty. It is less well-known that many millions of people around the world do not fail to achieve education from choice, or from lack of capacity. What usually happens is that the resources they need – resources we take for granted – simply do not exist in their communities. When the Anglican Church responded to a need in their local community, they opened the doors not only of a library, but to a future full of hope for children like Eden, who can now dream of a better future.

### Sentence

Jesus said: How often have I desired to gather your children together as a hen gathers her brood under her wings, and you were not willing!



*Hope for the Hungry Mind. ABM has helped provide a library for children such as Eden in Ethiopia.*

### Reflection

After being warned by the Pharisees that Herod is waiting to catch Jesus and kill him, Jesus seems to speak ironically of Jerusalem. This place which is so beloved by the Jewish people is also the place where holy prophets, including himself, are killed. Perhaps there is a weariness about Jesus at this time. He is on edge, the time for the end of his earthly ministry is near. His own death and acute suffering are almost upon him. And yet there is also a place for extreme tenderness. Almost in the same breath as he speaks ironically about his death in Jerusalem, he laments over this beloved city and its people. We are given the tender image of the hen sheltering her brood of chicks under her wing. We can almost feel the softness and warmth of the hen's feathers, warming and caressing us. And yet the fox is near. For the time being, the hen has been able to stare down the fox, but not for much longer. Let us linger over this image of Jesus desiring to shelter us under his wing.

Do we choose to allow Jesus to do this to us? And what are the implications for our doing this? What does it mean for God's mission? At least in part, it means that in choosing to shelter in Christ, we also are willing to shelter others, to share this enormous

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love and compassion with others in God's kingdom. And we are willing to accept the warmth and shelter that others offer to us. This is mutual. Christ's loving embrace joins us in community. Often when a visitor or worker or pilgrimage from ABM comes into a remote community, whether it is an Indigenous Australian community or an isolated community in one of ABM's Partner Churches overseas, people express overwhelmingly how wonderful it is that someone from the Australian church "bothered to come". There is a sense in which such actions allow us to "stand in solidarity with the poor and needy". But there is also a reciprocal sense during such visits that we too are embraced by those communities we are visiting. Hospitality is amazing, even in the poorest of communities, and there is a real sense of host and guest alike being embraced by Christ's loving touch.

### Affirmation

We believe in a God of boundless love, who, creating us in God's likeness, gave us love as our prime impulse.

We believe in God's son, Jesus Christ, who through this great love, has a heartfelt desire and longing to gather us, his people, together in love for God and for each other.

And we believe in a Holy Spirit who, groaning within us, allows us to experience God's yearning love for us, and gives us courage and strength to love God, ourselves and others when loving is far from easy.

### Intercessions

**Leader:** Loving God, show us your compassion.

**Congregation:** And create in us your spirit of love.

Loving God, we pray for a world which often turns away from your boundless love, and, like Herod, even seeks to destroy it. Inspire our leaders to make choices that will bring your love, hope and justice to all people. **L.C.**

Loving God, we pray for our communities, and for communities everywhere. May all communities be built on and strengthened by love, which comes from you. May communities everywhere be inspired to reach out to bring others into their midst, and to be generous and hospitable to all. Help us to listen to each other in love and in true friendship. **L.C.**

Loving God, we pray for the needy and sick, both in our own communities and in those with whom ABM works. We pray for those whose material poverty means living with the distress of diseases such as malaria, dysentery, tuberculosis, diabetes, skin sores and parasites. And we pray for all those who work to prevent and treat illness among the countries served by ABM's partners, and in Australian Indigenous communities. **L.C.**

### Response/Action

**Think:** When next I hear of a friend or relative, or when I myself go to hospital to have an operation that will most likely, save their life, I will think about those people in remote parts of the world who have no chance of getting to effective hospital treatment, and for whom an attack of appendicitis, or a slight complication during childbirth, means certain death.

**Remember:** God's love is all-embracing, calling us both to love and be loved. This includes loving ourselves, accepting the love of others, and giving our love and ourselves to others. How can we practise each of these kinds of love this week?

**Read:** The ABM website ([www.abmission.org](http://www.abmission.org)) to see what projects are being supported by the Australian church. How can I become more involved in this work?

## LENT 2 STUDY GROUP QUESTIONS

Jesus said: "How often have I desired to gather your children together as a hen gathers her brood under her wings, and you were not willing!" (Luke 13:34)

As you watch the ABM DVD 'Hope for the Hungry Mind', think about these questions:

- What does what Jesus is saying in the sentence above taken from the gospel mean for us in terms of our concept of "community"?
- One of the ABM "Five Marks of Mission" is to "Stand in solidarity with the poor and needy". How does this saying of Jesus in Luke 13:34 guide us in this respect? Make a list of examples of what it means to stand in solidarity with someone, particularly someone helped by one of ABM's projects.
- The sentence is also about touch – the warmth of the touch and shelter of a hen with her chicks, and, by implication, the warm touch from one human being to another. We are warned a lot about "not touching" or "inappropriate touching" in our modern society, and yet here, from our Lord, is a wonderful example of "safe touching". In what circumstances might it be a good thing to touch someone? When might it be inappropriate? Do we allow others to embrace us, or do we stiffen and hold back our own affections?
- Jesus' love for us is unconditional from his perspective. It seems that it is only we who "are not willing" to be loved, to be gathered in. Do we receive people unconditionally? Do we allow ourselves to be "gathered together" in God's community? Do we truly listen to others?
- People in many parts of the world have only the most basic forms of shelter. In some places, beset by wars or ethnic tensions, or vulnerable to the effects of climate change, rising sea waters and increasingly unpredictable bad weather patterns, homes are not safe places to live. What is ABM doing to help people in such places to find safe havens, or to make their homes strong against adverse weather conditions? You may wish to look at the ABM website ([www.abmission.org](http://www.abmission.org)) to find out. How can you help in this work yourself?