

1. This morning we are going to talk about our 6<sup>th</sup> S: Sanctuary. It like some of our other subjects come from Psalm 34, especially the first 5 verses:
  - a. *"Those who look to him are radiant; their faces are never covered with shame. This poor man called, and the Lord heard him; he saved him out of all his troubles (struggles). The angel of the Lord encamps around those who fear (trust) him, and he delivers (provides security for) them. Taste and see that the Lord is good (satisfaction); blessed is the man who takes refuge (sanctuary) in him. Fear the Lord, you his saints, for those who fear him lack nothing. The lions may grow weak and hungry, but those who seek the Lord lack no good thing."*
2. Sanctuary is a good word, coming from Late Latin sanctuarium, meaning simply, "holy place."
  - a. Webster defines sanctuary as "a consecrated place, a place for worship."
    - i. It is also defined as a "place of refuge or protection as in a wildlife sanctuary." NO HUNTING ALLOWED.
  - b. Sanctuaries are necessary for me to function in my life.
    - i. I need sanctuary--a refuge--from many things.
      1. Perhaps you need to come home to a quiet spot after a hectic day, your home becomes your sanctuary, your refuge from a hostile workplace.
      2. Sometimes we need refuge from our fears.
      3. Other times we need refuge, a safe place from those who would harm us.
  - c. Holy means to be set apart. Special. Like no other. Without match.
    - i. I have found sanctuary in the woods when I am sitting on a tree stand and watching quietly and listening to the wind whistle through the trees while the squirrels rustle in the leaves below as they search for hidden nuts. Whether I have my bow with me or not, whether a deer comes by or not, the peace and solitude is refreshing...I have found refuge
3. Most of us don't think much about sanctuary or refuge in our lives...unless we are running from something or someone.
  - a. **Sanctuary can be any place we go to, when we find the need to get away from something or someone.**
  - b. The movie, "The Fugitive" is a classic example of someone running from his accusers.
    - i. There seems to be no place to hide, no place that someone won't find him.
    - ii. There isn't a safe place to hide as he runs away from the law.
    - iii. "Let not your heart be troubled," Jesus says, "trust in God, trust also in me" (John 14:1, NIV).
  - c. Today you are here for a reason.
    - i. Maybe you are running toward God.
    - ii. Maybe you are running away from something or someone.
      1. Maybe even from yourself or your past.
    - iii. Whether you realize it or not, you are seeking sanctuary...holy sanctuary.
    - iv. You might be here because you fell like this is home.
      1. It is your safe harbor from the troubles of life.
        - a. You can count on the people here to love you.
      2. We all need sanctuary. Many of us come to church to be recharged to live another week in a world that is often hostile toward our desire to live as a follower of Christ.
      3. Here's Hope is a safe harbor of God's love where you can grow as a follower of Jesus Christ.
        - a. It is a sanctuary.
        - b. Where you don't have to worry about criticism, where you aren't going to be condemned for not measuring up.
        - c. You come as you are.

- d. We walk with you as God works on you from the inside out.
- d. When I was a new Christian, I used to go to a local church building before work each day to sit quietly in its awe-inspiring spaces to find a little sanctuary before entering work.
    - i. **But sanctuary is not just a place but a person.**
    - ii. *blessed is the man who takes refuge (sanctuary) in him.(IN GOD)*
    - iii. How does the bible talk about sanctuary?
4. There is a biblical concept found in the Old Testament that most of us gloss over and do not pay attention to very clearly.
    - a. It is a concept called the Cities of Refuge.
    - b. In biblical times, there weren't police forces and centralized justice systems.
      - i. What would happen, if someone committed a crime, the person who was hurt by the crime would have the right to exact justice upon that person.
      - ii. So if someone robbed you, you could capture that person and bring them to the town square and the village elders would gather with you, determine his guilt, and then if found guilty, you would be allowed to (and expected to) cut off the hands of the guilty party as retribution for the crime.
      - iii. There were no jails to speak of. Justice was quick and personal.
      - iv. If you accidentally killed someone in a hunting accident or you were drag racing with your horse and a child stepped in front of you – you were going to have to face the justice that the relative of the one you accidentally killed would mete out.
    - c. In bible times, if an axe head flew off the axe handle when you and some buddies were cutting firewood and it killed one of them...the relatives of the one who died wouldn't waste time suing the axe manufacturer.
      - i. No, they would get revenge by killing you. A life for a life.
    - d. Now that doesn't sound too fair does it...having to die for an accident?
      - i. Not too long ago at the Lake County Fair a child was killed when electrical inspectors failed to do their job checking the grounding of a ride.
        1. All of those inspectors are doing time right now in Lake County Jail for their negligence.
        2. It was an accident. And it was negligence.
        3. The grief of the family that lost their little boy is real, regardless of whether it was an accident or not.
        4. They no longer have their son.
      - ii. If we lived in bible times, they would be allowed to exact justice on those who had been at fault.
    - e. But God foresaw this conflicting possibility and gave the Israelites a special provision in their laws: It is the "right of refuge."
      - i. It is found in Numbers 35, Dt. 19:1-13 and Joshua 20.
      - ii. Joshua 20:1-6 *"The LORD said to Joshua, 2"Now tell the Israelites to designate the cities of refuge, as I instructed Moses. 3Anyone who kills another person unintentionally can run to one of these cities and be protected from the relatives of the one who was killed, for the relatives may seek to avenge the killing. 4"Upon reaching one of these cities, the one who caused the accidental death will appear before the leaders at the city gate and explain what happened. They must allow the accused to enter the city and live there among them. 5If the relatives of the victim come to avenge the killing, the leaders must not release the accused to them, for the death was accidental. 6But the person who caused the death must stay in that city and be tried by the community and found innocent. Then the one declared innocent because the death was accidental must continue to live in*

*that city until the death of the high priest who was in office at the time of the accident. After that, the one found innocent is free to return home."*

- iii. Essentially, it set aside 6 cities of refuge, spread strategically throughout Israel, so that that if a person had accidentally killed someone that he would have a safe place to run and have his guilt or innocence determined without being killed first.
  1. If he was found to be innocent, he had to remain in the city of refuge for either the rest of his life or the life of the high priest.
  2. His life was spared. And he could start his life over.
  3. The death of the high priest marked FINAL deliverance. His death marked the end of the statute of limitations. Just like the Year of Jubilee (every 50 years) cancelled debts, the death of the high priest cancelled the debt. He was free to go home.
  4. However, until this event, he had to stay within the walls of the city. If he ventured out, the avenger had the right to claim his life.

#### 5. Parallels with Jesus

a. **Jesus is the ultimate city of refuge.**

b. Each city, like Jesus **is easily found.**

- i. There were signs and well maintained roads to each of the six cities. It was as if everywhere you went that you could find directions to one of the cities of refuge.
- ii. The Israelites make sure that the cities could be easily found by anyone in need.
- iii. And like these cities, Jesus is not hard to find.

1. Most of us don't seek Him for precisely that reason.
2. We try the harder things first. We do everything but Jesus.
3. But Jesus isn't far from us.
4. He is only a call away. He is only a look of a seeking heart away from you.

c. **Each city, like Jesus was for the guilty.**

i. Jesus came to save the guilty, He came to a guilty world. (Ro 3:9-23)

ii. Jesus came to call sinners. (Luke 19:1-10), Colossians 1:13.

*1. He entered Jericho and was passing through. 2 And there was a man called by the name of Zaccheus; he was a chief tax collector and he was rich. 3 Zaccheus was trying to see who Jesus was, and was unable because of the crowd, for he was small in stature. 4 So he ran on ahead and climbed up into a sycamore tree in order to see Him, for He was about to pass through that way. 5 When Jesus came to the place, He looked up and said to him, "Zaccheus, hurry and come down, for today I must stay at your house." 6 And he hurried and came down and received Him gladly. 7 When they saw it, they all began to grumble, saying, "He has gone to be the guest of a man who is a sinner." 8 Zaccheus stopped and said to the Lord, "Behold, Lord, half of my possessions I will give to the poor, and if I have defrauded anyone of anything, I will give back four times as much." 9 And Jesus said to him, "Today salvation has come to this house, because he, too, is a son of Abraham. 10 "For the Son of Man has come to seek and to save that which was lost."*

2. He didn't come for the innocent. (there are none, but there are plenty of people who think they are innocent)

- a. In fact, Jesus even said, "it is the sick who need a doctor" and he promptly ministered to all who came to him. Those who stood far off and scoffed had no clue to their neediness.

3. Jesus came only to save the guilty.

- a. You do have to admit your guilt. You must admit you need him.
- b. You cannot find sanctuary without the admission of need.
  - i. To enter the city of refuge you had to explain your case. You had to confess your need.
  - ii. It would be idiotic for someone to be running from his pursuers, their dust clouds a short distance away, to come to the gates of the city and say, "Let me in...I don't have a need."
  - iii. The very fact that one is there is proof of the need.
- c. It reminds me of the man who tossed his dirty shirts into the trunk of his car to take them to the dry cleaner later that day. But he forgot. Not only did he forget, but he didn't realize that he'd recently pitched a tire jack in the trunk after he had changed a flat. Several days passed and when the man realized that he had to take those shirts to the dry cleaners he found them smeared with grease. Embarrassed, he walked into the cleaners and began to apologize for the dirty clothes.
  - i. The attendant interrupted him. "Please don't apologize sir, that's why we are here. If you could clean those shirts yourself, you wouldn't need us."
  - ii. If you could clean up your own mess, you wouldn't need Jesus. But that is why He came. To forgive your sin and clean up the mess of your life. Admit you need him!
- 4. If you deny your need, you cannot be helped.
- 5. IF you admit your need, God will save you! You will enter sanctuary!
- d. Each city, like Jesus **is easily accessed**.
  - i. Each of the six cities were so situated that you could walk (or run) to them within 12 hours of any place in Israel.
  - ii. God is even more accessible.
    - 1. Doors never locked, if you decide at midnight to call on Jesus, He is there, you don't need to waken Him. He is waiting for you to call upon Him.
- e. Each city, like Jesus **provides protection only to those who are willing to leave everything behind and enter into the sanctuary**.
  - i. It is true, you can't take it with you.
  - ii. When you come to Christ, you leave the past behind. You lay down your history. You leave your "stuff" behind. He takes you just the way you are.
  - iii. This is one of the truths that causes many people to prefer to take their chances with fate: they don't want to leave everything behind.
    - 1. I guess if you don't actually see your pursuer, or if it doesn't appear he is going to come to get you (an illusion) then you might be deluded into thinking you can somehow remain outside the city.
    - 2. You don't see your need.
    - 3. But if you see the dust clouds coming, you would drop all you have and save your life, the same way that when a fire strikes, people leave their homes. Your life is something you can't replace.
- f. Each city, like Jesus **was the ONLY place of safety**.
  - i. Acts 4:12 "Salvation is found in no one else, for there is no other name under heaven to men by which we must be saved."
  - ii. John 14:6 "Jesus said, I am the way, the truth and the life. No one comes to the Father except by me."

- iii. He is your only hope.
  - 1. The only refuge from condemnation (John 3:17-13)
  - 2. Only refuge from hell (Lk 16:19-31)
  - 3. Only refuge from God's wrath (1 Thess 1:10, Jn 3:36)
- iv. Jesus will never cast you out. You are safe with Him. His word and His actions underline that fact over and over.
  
- g. Each city, like Jesus, **provided protection only to those who were willing to remain in them.**
  - i. Cf Jn 15:4 *Abide (remain) in me, and I will abide (remain) in you*
  - ii. In my ministry I have seen folks get very excited about being forgiven, but then they see stuff in life that they want to go back and play with. They forget that they must remain in Christ and to experience all He has for them. They wander outside the gates.
  
- h. Each city, like Jesus, **was open to all...to everyone.**
  - i. The cities weren't just for Jews, but for anyone in the land.
  - ii. The bible says, "*Whosoever calls upon the name of the Lord shall be saved.*"
    - 1. The invitation to sanctuary isn't just for religious people or people who have the right connections. It is for everyone. That whosoever includes you and I.
  
- i. **Jesus is our High Priest...His death secures our release.**
  - i. This is a picture of what Jesus has done. The fact that Jesus is also our High Priest makes clear the parallel.
  - ii. Not only did his death pay the price of our sins, but it symbolizes the freedom from guilt in the same way that the death of the high priest marked the end of the statute of limitations. We are free.
  - iii. Our sanctuary is not a city, it is a person. We don't leave Him though. He alone is our safety. But we are free.

## 6. Contrasts:

- a. The sanctuary cities were for someone who had accidentally committed murder...unintentionally.
  - i. But the person who flees to Christ isn't one who has accidentally rejected God.
  - ii. Those who come to Christ are those who recognize that their lives of sin and rebellion against the rule of God in their lives is an offense deserving death.
  - iii. They recognize that they are saved by the very gift of God and it is not something they deserve.
  - iv. The refuge Jesus Christ provides is from the very wrath of God that every human being upon this earth deserves because we have set ourselves up as gods.
  - v. When we run to Jesus, we acknowledge that fact and we find refuge...against all odds!
  
- b. For the one who ran to the city, that city remained his sanctuary from the avenger of blood, but it also acted as a prison to his freedom.
  - i. He left all he had behind including his inheritance.
  - ii. When one comes to Christ, he leaves all behind and gains an inheritance (1 Peter 1:4).
  - iii. If the one who found sanctuary left the city, he could regain his inheritance in the land, but he would face death.
  - iv. But for the Christian, we lose our past and gain an eternal inheritance.
    - 1. We don't lose our freedom, but rather we gain it.
    - 2. We are free from the control of external things in this world and free to walk by the Spirit of God.

3. We discover that before we came to Jesus Christ we were one of those “dead people walking around.” We were alienated from God and we were dead in our trespasses.

7. What about You and I?

- a. There are many folks who come to Christ but they set up their tents outside the city. They don't get too close to Him.
  - i. They never really enter into a relationship with Him.
  - ii. They figure that if they hang around Christians or just go to church that they will be safe.
  - iii. This may be because they really don't want to leave their past behind.
  - iv. Or it may be because they really don't want to give up control of their lives.
  - v. Being religious won't ensure your safety. You must enter into a personal relationship with Jesus Christ and receive the gift of forgiveness He offers you.
- b. But until you personally enter into a saving relationship with Jesus Christ you are still a fugitive.
- c. Isaiah 45:22 says, “*Look unto me and be saved, all the ends of the earth.*”
  - i. If you will look to Jesus you will have it.
  - ii. He will be your sanctuary.
    1. He will save you from your fears and from condemnation.
  - iii. When an accidental murderer fled to the cities of refuge, he was simply claiming the promises of God. In like manner, when you flee to Jesus, you are making a statement of faith. You are taking Him at His word. He is faithful to keep His promises!
    1. Ro 10:9, 10:13, Acts 16:31, Jn 6:37, 47.
    2. **Faith is taking REFUGE in the ability of another to protect or meet your needs.**
    3. To live by faith means to depend upon God alone.
      - a. It means to voluntarily abandon the defense that so often fail us.
      - b. The one who is destitute of his own devices and at the end of his rope will seek what he needs from God alone.
    4. The reason we don't have power is that we aren't weak enough to realize our utter dependence...the power of Christ is only perfected in our weakness.
    5. It is not Christ making me powerful – it is Christ being the power
      - a. He is my refuge in my weakness.
      - b. He is the refuge. He doesn't make me strong. He doesn't make me a refuge. He is my refuge.
  - d. This week I was struggling with worry...and heard a song on the radio about making God my refuge...it was as if God was speaking my sermon to me. Today, you may be hearing God speaking to you.

8. Where is your sanctuary? Where is your refuge? The bible says that God hides us in the cleft of the rock. He is our refuge. He is our strength.

- a. Where do you find your refuge?
  - i. David ran from Saul for years, finding refuge in mountains and crags. He cried out to the Lord over and over again.
- b. If your sanctuary, if your refuge is in Jesus Christ, you don't go to bed at night wondering if your life is going to count.
  - i. There are no unimportant days in your life. There are no insignificant events in your life. Your life is growing into a glorious future. You are connected with an awesome and eternal purpose. Your life means something. God has a plan for you.
- c. Some Christians wander out of the city and when they do, they wander out of the protection God designed for them.
  - i. We spoke about it a few months ago in my series on Authority.

- ii. When we move out of God's will, we move outside the protection of His covering, not unlike young chicks venturing out under the protection of their mother's wings when she covers them from the view of the hawk soaring overhead.
  - iii. A man I know went to Yellowstone N.Park after a huge fire had destroyed 1000's of acres of that beautiful area. The park ranger told him about inspecting the damage and finding a dead bird in a clump of ashes. He went over to the ashes of the dead bird and moved them with his foot. To his surprise, four little birds jumped up and flew away. [Psalm 91:4](#) says, "He will cover you with His feathers and under His wings you will find refuge."
    - 1. This is what God will do for you during your time of need.
    - 2. When all is ashes, God will be your refuge.
    - 3. Won't you come to Him today? Make Him your refuge, your sanctuary?
9. One of my favorite songs and one that touches me the most when I am out of fellowship with God is "What a Friend". Let me read you the words.

What a Friend

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What a Friend we have in Jesus,  
 All our sins and grief's to bear!  
 What a privilege to carry,  
 Everything to God in prayer!  
 O what peace we often forfeit,  
 O what needless pain we bear,  
 All because we do not carry,  
 Everything to God in prayer!

Have we trials and temptations?  
 Is there trouble anywhere?  
 We should never be discouraged,  
 Take it to the Lord in prayer.  
 Can we find a friend so faithful,  
 Who will all our sorrows share?  
 Jesus knows our every weakness,  
 Take it to the Lord in prayer.

Are we weak and heavy laden,  
 Cumbered with a load of care?  
**Precious Saviour, still our refuge,**  
 Take it to the Lord in prayer.  
 Do thy friends despise, forsake thee?  
 Take it to the Lord in prayer;  
 In His arms He'll take and **shield thee,**  
 Thou wilt find a solace there.

10. Are you needing solace, refuge, are you weak and heavy laden? Jesus offers to be your refuge and your sanctuary from the storms of life.
- a. We close with our time of ministry and response. You may have a need that you need to bring to Jesus today. Come to Him. Trust His resources which are infinite, not your own, which are fleeting. Bring it to Him...in prayer.
  - b. Lets pray