WEEKLY DEVOTION · CLOBBER PASSAGES, WEEK 5

An Everlasting Name

Following Sunday's sermon, "No Place at the Altar?"

SCRIPTURE · ISAIAH 56:3–5 AND 1 JOHN 4:16

> *To those who had been shut out of the assembly, God promises "a monument and a name better than sons and daughters… an everlasting name that shall not be cut off." And John writes: "God is love, and those who abide in love abide in God, and God abides in them."*

REFLECTION

On All Saints Sunday, we spoke names out loud and lit a candle for each one. There is something holy about hearing a name said in the house of God. It means: you belonged here. You are not forgotten.

For the eunuchs of ancient Israel, being forgotten was the deepest fear. With no children to carry on their name, it seemed that when they died, they would vanish. The old law even kept them out of the assembly. So when God speaks through Isaiah, the promise lands exactly where it hurts most: I will give you a name better than sons and daughters, a name that will never be cut off.

Centuries later, one of those eunuchs, an official from Ethiopia, met Philip on a desert road. He asked a question shaped by a lifetime of being turned away: "What is to prevent me from being baptized?" And the answer was: nothing.

Many people in our own time have heard that same "not you." LGBTQ+ siblings, especially, have been placed in categories that wound, and that harm doesn't stay on the surface. It becomes shame, fear, and isolation. But the good news is just as real: one accepting person, one open door, can change everything.

John reminds us that love is not a category but a dwelling place. Wherever love abides, God abides. Our calling is simply to make that love visible, so that no one has to wonder whether there is a place for them.

PRACTICE FOR THE WEEK

Read Isaiah 56:3–8 and Acts 8:26–39 side by side. Then think of someone who may feel there is no place for them in church, perhaps an LGBTQ+ friend or family member. Reach out this week with a simple message: "I thought of you, and I'm glad you're in my life."

PRAYER

God who never forgets a name,
thank you for the saints who have gone before us,
and for every child of yours who was ever told "not you."
Make me a companion, not a gatekeeper.
Let me abide in love,
so that others may find you abiding there too.
Amen.