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**“Safe”**Exodus 12:21-30

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“The language of Christianity is the language of substitution. It is not primarily the language of morals. God is not presented as a mother saying ‘eat all your vegetables.’ Instead, Christianity is about a one-sided rescue—that we didn’t want and certainly didn’t deserve, and he did it anyway.”

— Rod Rosenblatt

“Moved by the perfection of his holy love, God in Christ substituted himself for us sinners. That is the heart of the Cross of Christ.”

— John Stott

“Self-help is the American gospel, which translates into self-congratulation and self-protection. ... Jesus looks at us and he knows that we cannot help ourselves. He looks at us this very day in the same way he looked at every human being that he encountered during his earthly life: with infinite sadness for our predicament, yet with unquenchable love and with unflinching resolve to rescue us from certain condemnation and death, whatever it took, wherever it led, whatever the price. ‘Self-help’ is crucified with Christ.”

— Fleming Rutledge

**Questions to Guide Reflection and Response**

- Icebreaker: How would you describe yourself to someone who doesn’t know you?
- From the Scripture passage (or from the sermon), what left an impression on you? What kinds of questions came up in your mind, or what emotions were stirred in your heart?
- Can you think of a time where someone “took the fall” for you? I.e., they bore the weight of your guilt? Or vice versa? What happened? What was it like to experience that?
- Read the quote from Rod Rosenblatt above. When you were growing up, how did you come to view God: as a mother nagging you about your vegetables or about a God who has rescued you? Or some mixture of both? What is the picture of God that our passage paints for us?
- It’s understandable that the world might be turned off by the repeated mention of blood in the Bible, but why do you think even some Christian churches and leaders have shied away from using this language? Why is it important to keep both the substitution and the blood of Christ as central tenets of the gospel?
- In her quote above, Fleming Rutledge talks about self-help being the “American gospel” but that it is “crucified with Christ.” What does she mean by this? What do you think about that? It might feel like a death, but how does the crucifixion of self-help actually set us free?
- Where do you need to be encouraged today?
- Take a few moments to pray for one another.