

A MAN ON A MISSION, A MAN OF COMPASSION

Sermon for the 2nd Sunday in Lent 2022

Luke 13:31-35

The grace of the Lord Jesus Christ, and the love of God, and the fellowship of the Holy Spirit be with you all. Amen.

The text for our sermon today is our Gospel we just heard read, Luke 13:31-35: ³¹ **Right at that time some Pharisees came to Jesus and told Him, “Leave here and go away! For Herod wants to kill You.”**

³² **He answered them, “Go and tell that fox, ‘Look! Today and tomorrow I am driving out demons and working healings and on the third day I shall be perfected!’** ³³ **Nevertheless I must be on My way today, tomorrow and the next day, because it is impossible that a prophet should perish outside of Jerusalem.**

³⁴ **“Jerusalem, Jerusalem, the one that kills the prophets and stones those who have been sent to it! How often I have wanted to gather your children together, as a hen gathers her chickens under her wings, but you have not been willing!** ³⁵ **Look! Your house is abandoned to your disadvantage. I also tell you, you certainly will not see Me until the time comes when you say, ‘Blessed is He who comes in the name of the Lord!’”**

Lord God, heavenly Father, sanctify us through Your truth, Your Word is truth. Amen.

Dear friends in Christ,

Today we see two aspects of Jesus’ character come to the forefront. First, we see Him as a man on a mission, and second, as a man of compassion. In both aspects, Jesus’ focus today is on Jerusalem.

Luke begins by showing us Jesus as a *man on a mission*. That comes through loud and clear in the first half of our text, where Luke writes: **“Right at that time some Pharisees came to Jesus and told Him, “Leave here and go away! For Herod wants to kill You.”**

³² **He answered them, “Go and tell that fox, ‘Look! Today and tomorrow I am driving out demons and working healings and on the third day I shall be perfected!’** ³³ **Nevertheless I must be on My way today, tomorrow and the next day, because it is impossible that a prophet should perish outside of Jerusalem.”**

It is loud and clear here that Jesus is a man on a mission and that that mission will take Him to Jerusalem. But what may not be so clear at first glance is this business about the Pharisees and Herod, with Jesus answering them, **“Go and tell that fox,”** so let me explain.

Jesus had been busy for some time now with His ministry in the region of Galilee. He had been preaching and teaching, healing the sick, casting out demons, and calling disciples. Jesus had been attracting large crowds and gaining a lot of attention, yet at the same time, He had also made some enemies, people who were opposed to Him. Among those enemies were the Pharisees. Jesus had exposed the Pharisees for their hypocrisy, for their wanting to look good and pious in front of people, but all the while, in their hearts, they were not humbling themselves before God. Jesus called them out on this, and they didn’t like it. Jesus was hurting their image and exposing their pride and sinfulness. So the Pharisees in Galilee had reason to want to get Jesus out of their hair.

The other party involved here is Herod. Now, whenever you say “Herod” in the New Testament, you’ve got to keep them all straight because there are several Herods. This one is Herod Antipas, the tetrarch of Galilee. He’s the same Herod who had John the Baptist put to death. And now, the Pharisees tell Jesus, **“Herod wants to kill You.”** Did Herod really want to kill Jesus, or were the Pharisees saying this to try to scare Jesus out of the territory? Or maybe Herod wanted to get Jesus out of the region, and that’s why he fed this rumour to the Pharisees so that they would report it to Jesus. Who knows? Luke doesn’t say.

In any case, one thing was clear: Jesus was not scared into leaving or changing His timetable just because of a threat. He had a little more work to do here in Galilee, and then it was on to Jerusalem. Jesus was in charge of His own schedule. He said, **“Today and tomorrow I am driving out demons and working healings and on the third day I shall be perfected!”** And it’s what He said after this that makes it clear His mission will take Him to Jerusalem: **“Nevertheless I must be on My way today, tomorrow and the next day, because it is impossible that a prophet should perish outside of Jerusalem.”**

But this is very strange, isn’t it? we know that Jesus is going to Jerusalem, but what is He going there to do? **“It is impossible that a prophet should perish outside of Jerusalem.”** “Perish”? This sounds like He’s saying He’s going

to Jerusalem to die! Yes, that's what this mission is about - a journey to Jerusalem, to be rejected and be killed. Jesus knows what He's getting into, and yet still He goes.

Think back to how this theme has been developing so far in the Gospel. After Jesus' baptism, when He's being tempted in the wilderness by the devil, one of those temptations is for Jesus to throw Himself off the pinnacle of the temple, to land unhurt, and thus win the acclaim of the crowds in Jerusalem.¹ But that will not be how Jesus will accomplish His mission. No, even when the crowds at the cross later will say, "*He should come down from the cross now, and we shall believe in Him*" (Matt. 27:42), Jesus resists that temptation, for that will not be how He reaches His goal.

Or think about how, after Peter's great confession, "*You are the Christ, the Son of the living God*" (Matt. 16:16), Jesus began predicting His passion, His suffering. He had said, "*The Son of Man must suffer many things, be rejected by the elders, Chief Priests and scribes, be killed and be raised on the third day*" (Luke 9:22). This is what would happen in Jerusalem. This is how the mission would play out.

Or again, at Jesus' transfiguration, Moses and Elijah are talking with Jesus about His departure, "*which He was about to make come true*" at Jerusalem (Luke 9:31). And after the transfiguration, Luke writes, "*As the time was coming nearer for Jesus to be taken up, He steadfastly set His face to go to Jerusalem*" (Luke 9:51).

Jesus set His face to go to Jerusalem, knowing that rejection and suffering and death awaited Him there. He was determined. There would be no stopping Him or diverting Him from finishing His course. Jesus had a clear sense of where He was going and what He was doing. That's what we're seeing in our text today: a man on a mission.

But why is He doing this? Why is Jesus so determined, knowing what awaits Him in Jerusalem? Two reasons: First, He had come to do the will of His Father, and this is what the Father wills. This is the Father's plan for the salvation of the world. Second, Jesus is doing this *for us*. This is the only way the goal will be reached, the mission accomplished. We all have sins that need to be atoned for, and we can't do it. We have death hanging over our heads, and we can't change that. But Jesus can, and He does *because He is the very Son of God*, come to do His Father's will, which is to save sinful mankind. The blood He will shed on the cross, for us - this is the only thing that can pay the debt of our sins. The resurrection that He will thus procure - this is the only thing that will take the sting out of death for us. This then is the mission that Jesus is on. It will take Him to Jerusalem - He's got His face set for there, so there's no stopping Him until He reaches His goal.

So along with this text showing us Jesus as a man on a mission, it also shows us Jesus as a *man of compassion*. See the tender, kind, loving heart of our Lord, that He would do this for us! For all of us sinners, who have defied God in so many ways, and yet God loves us. Jesus willingly goes the way of the cross for us. What supreme love and compassion this is!

Hear this compassion in Jesus' voice, as His heart aches for the city that will reject Him and kill Him: ³⁴ "**Jerusalem, Jerusalem, the one that kills the prophets and stones those who have been sent to it! How often I have wanted to gather your children together, as a hen gathers her chickens under her wings, but you have not been willing!** ³⁵ **Look! Your house is abandoned to your disadvantage. I also tell you, you certainly will not see Me until the time comes when you say, 'Blessed is He who comes in the name of the Lord!'**"

Of all cities, Jerusalem should have been the one to welcome the Messiah. Jerusalem had every advantage. How many times had God sent prophets to her, calling Jerusalem and the nation to repentance? Yet how many times had Jerusalem *rejected* those prophets? Now that God had sent His own Son, they would reject Him also. With that ultimate rejection, God's ultimate judgment would fall on Jerusalem. Forty years after rejecting their Messiah and putting Him to death, Jerusalem would fall at the hands of the Romans in A.D. 70. The temple was destroyed. "**Look! Your house is abandoned to your disadvantage.**"

But judgment is not Jesus' - or God's - primary will. The primary or proper will of God is to save. Jesus says, "**How often I have wanted to gather your children together, as a hen gathers her chickens under her wings.**"

Here we see the grace and mercy of our God. Jesus had wanted to gather the people of Jerusalem to Himself, to take them under the shelter of His wings, as a hen gathers her chicks. But God's grace is not irresistible. Jerusalem said no.

¹ Luke 4:9

“How often I have wanted to gather your children together, as a hen gathers her chickens under her wings, but you have not been willing!” You have not been willing, Jerusalem!

Sadly, people still say no to God and His offer of grace and forgiveness and salvation. They say no. *“No, thank you, Jesus, I don’t think I need a Saviour. I don’t think I’m that bad of a person. I’ll be fine on my own.”* What foolishness, what stupidity, what utter blindness that is! But that is what Jerusalem was saying; that is what people today are saying when they reject Jesus.

And so it is to this day, all around us. So many in our community, maybe even in our own family - so many in our nation and world - so many are so self-secure, so hardened in their unbelief. They think they don’t need Jesus and what He has to offer. They don’t think they need the church, which is Christ’s church, His place, His people, His ministry, whereby the Gospel of salvation goes out in His name. But know this: All those who think they don’t need Jesus as their Saviour - ***they’re wrong, dead wrong***. There is no hope for them, apart from Christ. He is the one and only Saviour God has sent into the world, for all men, everywhere. There is no other. This is why they - this is why we - all of us need to repent and believe the Gospel.

So how is it with you? Will you be gathered in? Or will you try to go it on your own? Do you think you have what it takes to take care of your sins and overcome your death? Good luck with that. No, today, look to Jesus, look to your compassionate Saviour for your salvation. He is the Man on a mission who willingly goes to Jerusalem for our sake. He is the Man of compassion, who wants to gather us under His wings and shelter us from the storm and from every danger. In Christ, we are safe and secure - for eternity - with Him! **“Blessed is He who comes in the name of the Lord!”** Amen.

The peace of God which passes all understanding, keep your hearts and minds in Christ Jesus. Amen.

PRAYER FOR THE SECOND SUNDAY IN LENT

Almighty God, the Father of our Lord Jesus Christ, we praise You for Your marvellous grace to sinful people. You dwell in a light that no one can approach, but You have now shown Yourself to us in Your Son Jesus Christ. Through Him we approach You confidently as Your dear children. You are the Creator and Ruler of this vast universe, yet You are concerned for the happiness and good of each one of us. Accept our humble worship and praise, and grant that we may continue in our gracious fellowship with You through Jesus Christ.

We thank You, Father, that You have chosen us not to suffer Your anger, but to receive Your forgiveness, and to possess salvation through our Lord Jesus Christ, who died and rose again for us. Move us to hear and obey Your Son through whom You have spoken to us. Move us to follow the example that Jesus has given us. Open our hearts, that Jesus may continue to live in them. Grant that we may cling to Jesus as the only way through which people may come into Your glorious presence. Move us, both by the way in which You shape our lives, and through Your promises in the Gospel, to make our own commitment to You, in love, praise, and adoration.

Grant that we may walk in obedience to Your commandments, test all things by Your Word, cling to what is good, and have nothing to do with any kind of evil. Make us holy by Your Spirit to live the life of holiness, to which Christ has called us, and keep us free of all fault until His coming.

Father, since You desire all people to be saved and to come to know the truth, give us opportunities to proclaim Your Gospel to the ends of the earth. Inspire us to work, pray, and give for the salvation of people who as yet do not know You.

Grant that all in authority in our country may respect Your holy will. Protect from harm those who are in danger. Give peace and harmony to the nations on earth.

Make our homes harmonious places where the Holy Spirit is present with His power and wisdom. Give spiritual insight to all mothers. Grant all fathers godly leadership. Give all children an obedient spirit.

Have mercy on all who have gathered here today. Support the weak; correct the disobedient. Comfort us whenever we are troubled in body, mind, or spirit. We ask these things, and everything else we need, in the name of Your Son Jesus, who gave His life as a ransom for us all. Amen.

SECOND SUNDAY IN LENT

Jeremiah 26:8-15

⁸ When Jeremiah had finished speaking everything that the LORD had commanded him to speak to all the people, the priests, the prophets and all the people took hold of him and said, “You will certainly die! ⁹ Why have you been prophesying in the name of the LORD, saying, ‘This Temple will be like Shiloh, and this city will be desolate, with no one living in it?’”

Then all the people gathered around Jeremiah in the Temple of the LORD. ¹⁰ When the officials of Judah heard about these things, they came up from the king’s palace to the Temple of the LORD and sat down at the entrance of the New Gate of the Temple of the LORD.

¹¹ Then the priests and the prophets told the officials and all the people, “This man should be condemned to death because he has been prophesying against this city, as you have heard!”

¹² Then Jeremiah told all the officials and all the people: “The LORD has sent me to prophesy against this Temple and against this city all the Words that you have heard. ¹³ Now therefore, reform your ways and your deeds and listen to the voice of the LORD, your God, that the LORD may relent about the calamity that He has pronounced against you! ¹⁴ However, as for me, look! I am in your hands. Do to me what you think is good and right! ¹⁵ Only you should know for certain that, if you put me to death, you will certainly make yourselves, this city and those who live in it responsible for killing an innocent person. For in truth the LORD has sent me to you to speak all these Words in your hearing.”

Philippians 3:17-4:1

¹⁷ My fellow-Christians, keep on imitating me and taking note of those who live according to the example we are giving you! ¹⁸ For I have often told you and now tell you with tears, that many live as the enemies of the cross of Christ. ¹⁹ In the end they will be destroyed. Their own feelings are their god. They glory in their shame, and their minds are on earthly things. ²⁰ For we are citizens of heaven and look for the Lord Jesus Christ to come from heaven as the Saviour.

²¹ He will change our humble bodies and make them like His glorified body, because He has the power by which He can make everything subordinate to Himself.

^{4:1} So, my dearly loved fellow-Christians, for whom I long, my joy and crown, stand firm in the Lord!

Luke 13:31-35

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