

MINISTRY BY MAIL
Lutheran Conference of Confessional Fellowship
www.lutheranlccf.org
Second Sunday in Lent, March 5, 2023

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(Hymns found in The Lutheran Hymnal, CPH, 1941)

Hymns: 145, 61:1-2, 278, 419, 54.

Lessons: Deuteronomy 18:15-18, Acts 7:44-60, Passion History, Part 2

Sermon Text: Luke 13:31-35.

Sermon by Pastor Robert Mehltrittter

NOTE: The Passion History is found on the LCCF website on the WEEKLY SERMON page.
<http://www.lutheranlccf.org/MinistrybyMail.html>

In the name of Jesus Christ, Dear Fellow Redeemed,

Right now, we are seeing war in the country of Ukraine which has been going on for a year. We daily can see images of fighting, destruction and death. People are leaving Ukraine because of fear of losing their lives. Men, women and children have left the country. Regardless of the details of what we want to believe, there are people who are leaving for fear of their own lives and the lives of their children.

I think we would probably be among the people who wouldn't want to die – at least not just yet.

Jesus had been in Galilee teaching and healing. At times there were large crowds following him. In the words just before our text we read that Jesus *“went through the towns and villages, teaching as he made his way to Jerusalem.”* Luke 13:22 (NIV).

As he was healing and teaching and preaching, he warned the Jews, the descendants of Abraham, Isaac and Jacob that *“There will be weeping ... and gnashing of teeth, when you see Abraham, Isaac and Jacob and all the prophets in the kingdom of God, but you yourselves thrown out. People will come from east and west and north and south, and will take their places at the feast in the kingdom of God. Indeed there are those who are last who will be first, and first who will be last.”* Luke 13:28-30 (NIV) This hints at the warning he gives for the people of Jerusalem at the end of our text.

Jesus knew that later in his life he would travel to Jerusalem to his death. Yet he was resolute about what was facing him and what he must do. Today we are reminded that

JESUS WAS RESOLVED TO DO WHAT HE KNEW HE HAD TO DO.

- 1. He had no fear from earthly rulers, for he knew that**
- 2. He would die in Jerusalem at the time God had appointed.**

Because we are now in the Lenten season, we are especially looking down the road to Jesus' final suffering and death. We are not looking forward as if we are waiting for something good to happen, but we have to realize it will ultimately be good for us. We know that he is going to suffer and die for us, in our place, to save us eternally. Jesus wasn't afraid of death – even a terrible death. He knew what he had to do – die. And he knew what was waiting for him and where it was going to happen.

Jesus went forward at the complete risk of his life. How unlike us! We aren't always ready and anxious to die. There are so many things we want to accomplish here on earth. But as God's beloved children, we know that even our lives are totally in God's hand, even about when we will die.

In our text, Jesus was warned *“Leave this place and go somewhere else. Herod wants to kill you.”* We don't know why some of the Pharisees warned him to leave. Of course, this was the Herod who had John the Baptist beheaded. We could guess at many reasons why they told him this, but this is the opening Jesus needs to tell them that Jerusalem is the place where he will be put to death.

He responds to those who were warning him: ***“Go tell that fox, ‘I will drive out demons and heal people today and tomorrow, and on the third day I will reach my goal.’ In any case, I must keep going today and tomorrow and the next day--for surely no prophet can die outside Jerusalem!”***

He sends the Pharisees back to Herod with the message that he will continue his work as a servant of the Lord until he reaches his goal. Jesus calls Herod a “fox”. In calling him a fox, he identifies Herod’s true character; for he was subtle as a fox, noted for his craftiness and treachery. This term was used by Jewish rabbis as a characterization of a sly or crafty person. Jesus, of course knew exactly the kind of person this Herod Antipas was, and he knew exactly why the Pharisees said what they did, although Scripture doesn’t explain that for us.

The region of Galilee in which Jesus was now traveling was the domain of Herod Antipas, the man who had John the Baptist killed and who was also in Jerusalem at the time of Jesus’ death. Herod Antipas was the son of Herod the Great, the terribly wicked king when Jesus was born in Bethlehem. The family with the name of Herod was a complex family, plainly unbelievers, as evidenced by their lives. Historians characterize this Herod as a weak man, who was led by his wife Herodias, the woman he married although she was the wife of his brother. Rather than concentrating on earthly rulers, the Bible concentrates on the ruler who redeemed us from sin, hell and eternal death, Jesus Christ.

Jesus knows that Herod will not kill him. He knows Jerusalem is where he must die, not in Herod’s territory. He also knows that he has much work to do. He will keep on going and doing the work his heavenly Father has laid out for him and complete it just as foretold in the Old Testament Scriptures.

His reference to three days isn’t literally three days until he will enter Jerusalem on the day we call Palm Sunday. But if we think about the importance of “three days” in the life of Jesus we remember that it was on the third day after his death that he reached his goal – he would rise from the dead! These words remind us that Jesus’ time on earth is short. But he also knew that no one could kill him until it is his time to die for sin, not his sin, of course, but the sin of all people. On the third day after his crucifixion Jesus will complete his work, when he rises from the dead.

As Jesus continues his teaching and his miracles, we realize that he will continue to do his work until the time is right for him to die. His divine power and majesty were revealed in his miracles.

Jesus makes it clear that it is in Jerusalem that he will die. Herod may threaten Jesus as much as he wants, but Jesus will not be killed in Herod’s territory.

Jesus tells us why he goes on wholly unconcerned about Herod: ***“for surely no prophet can die outside Jerusalem!”***

In no other place were so many prophets put to death, and surely the greatest prophet of them all would have to perish there. Jesus was the ultimate prophet whom Moses foretold: ***“The LORD your God will raise up for you a prophet like me from among your own brothers. You must listen to him.”*** Deuteronomy 18:15 (NIV)

We have here an echo of Jesus’ words two chapters earlier in Luke: ***“Woe to you, because you build tombs for the prophets, and it was your forefathers who killed them. So you testify that you approve of what your forefathers did; they killed the prophets, and you build their tombs. Because of this, God in his wisdom said, ‘I will send them prophets and apostles, some of whom they will kill and others they will persecute.’ Therefore this generation will be held responsible for the blood of all the prophets that has been shed since the beginning of the world, from the blood of Abel to the blood of Zechariah, who was killed between the altar and the sanctuary. Yes, I tell you, this generation will be held responsible for it all.”*** Luke 11:47-51 (NIV)

Jesus has nothing to fear from Herod. It is his own people living in the very center of Jewish religion and worship who present the greatest danger to his life. The fact is that Jerusalem, though she stands at the very heart of the worship of God, often kills the prophets God sends to her.

Jesus now speaks in words that are similar to those he uttered in the last week before his death. We read in Matthew chapter 23: ***“O Jerusalem, Jerusalem, you who kill the prophets and stone those sent to you, how often I have longed to gather your children together, as a hen gathers her chicks under her wings, but you were not willing. Look, your house is left to you desolate. For I tell you, you will not see me again until you say, ‘Blessed is he who comes in the name of the Lord.’”*** Matthew 23:37-39 (NIV) Not only does Jesus say he must go to Jerusalem and be killed there, he says the same words in our text: ***“O Jerusalem, Jerusalem, you who kill the prophets and stone those sent to you, how often I have longed to gather your children together, as a***

hen gathers her chicks under her wings, but you were not willing! Look, your house is left to you desolate. I tell you, you will not see me again until you say, 'Blessed is he who comes in the name of the Lord.'"

That Jesus said these words more than once shows his tender love and concern. "**Jerusalem**" is literally where Jesus will be tried and sentenced to death. But it also stands for the nation and the people. Jerusalem was their capital and the place where their temple was. Not only was he speaking of the people who lived in the city of Jerusalem but he was reaching out to all the descendants of Abraham, Isaac, and Jacob.

The name "Jerusalem" refers to a "city of peace"; but it certainly wasn't a place where God's true prophets could live in peace and proclaim God's messages. "**O Jerusalem, Jerusalem, you who kill the prophets and stone those sent to you**" Jesus says.

Jesus, as well as all of God's prophets, didn't proclaim God's love only once. He repeatedly gave the message from the Word of God, including God's law but especially the Gospel of salvation through faith in him. Prophet after prophet whom God had sent was killed by those who did not want to hear God's message.

In this picture of a hen and her chicks we see the gracious, saving will of Jesus. Jesus wants the salvation of Jerusalem, of the Jews, and of all mankind. He is the very Son of the true God, "**who will have all men to be saved, and to come unto the knowledge of the truth.**" 1 Timothy 2:4 (KJV) He certainly wanted everyone, even those who had him killed, to be saved. He wanted to gather all the people of this city and nation to himself.

Nothing is more tragic than the outcome of this gracious will of Jesus: "**but you were not willing!**" – the very words he spoke again as he came in to Jerusalem. Stephen, whom the Jews stoned to death, said the same things: "**you always resist the Holy Spirit. As your fathers did, so do you.**" Acts 7:51 (ESV)

Man can and does resist the will of God. We learn from Mark's Gospel "**he that believeth not shall be damned.**" Mark 16:16 (KJV) Damnation in hell results from man's own will, which always resists God's will of grace. It is the perverse will of man that condemns unbelievers. It is the human being who rejects or perverts the work of the Holy Ghost.

Jerusalem today is not really a Jewish city. It is a divided city. The location of the Temple is now a Moslem mosque. History tells the sad story of how the Jewish nation was driven out of its land. Unbelieving Jews did what they pleased with Jerusalem and the Temple. They were even now desecrating their Temple and making Jerusalem anything but a city of peace.

So in Jesus' words on this day we find a warning as well as the assurance that he will accomplish his work. That work was dying for the sins of all men, including us. That had to be accomplished in Jerusalem, so that believing that fact, you may not perish but have eternal life! Thanks be to God for that greatest of gifts! Amen.