

Lent 2

February 21, 2016

Text: Luke 13:31-35

Theme: Our Loving Savior on the Way to Jerusalem

1. Knows that he must die there
2. Mourns for those who reject him there

How do you face that which you dread? You know, those difficult times that are consequences of sin that you'd rather not go through. Do you fret and worry? Do you get stressed out? Do you avoid it altogether? Most likely it depends on the situation and different circumstances as to our response. Yet, anything you and I have gone through pales in comparison to what lay ahead for Jesus as he received word through some Pharisees of Herod's plot. His answer reveals Our Loving Savior on the Way to Jerusalem.

Leave this place and go somewhere else. Herod wants to kill you. There's some debate as to whether this was a genuine fact or part of a ploy to get Jesus from Galilee and Perea in the north where this Herod ruled to Jerusalem. In either case, they couldn't have been prepared for Jesus' answer. **I will drive out demons and heal people today and tomorrow, and on the third day I will reach my goal.** For years, these Pharisees had missed it. They failed to understand who Jesus was and what he came to be in spite of their deep familiarity with the prophecies like those of the First Lesson for today. They failed listen when Jesus told Simon the Pharisee in whose house he was dining on one occasion, that he came to forgive sins. And they failed to grasp how that forgiveness would come.

But know this, Jesus never lost sight of the purpose given him by his Father. **I will reach my goal.** There was a resolve in Jesus. Knowing full well what would happen. Seeing through the plots of the Pharisees. Jesus would march on. Nothing could stop him from doing his father's will. Nothing could distract him from the task at hand. Nothing could keep him from fulfilling his mission. And he would one day reach his goal as difficult and painful and sorrow-filled as the end would be.

He did it for you. He marched to Jerusalem knowing vividly what was ahead to rescue you from all those times that you've chosen the easy road and turned away from that which your Father has given you to do. For those times when it was easier to remain silent for fear of being mocked yourself, than to speak up and point out an error. For those times when your heart said, no, but your mind said, don't worry about it, it makes you feel good and your mind won out. Jesus resolute march to Jerusalem is the answer to all those times because he knows that he must to die there. And he must die, not for him, but for you and for me.

Appreciate this journey of Jesus. Recognize that he accomplish what you and I could not. Mimic his resolve in the face of trial and temptation. Life in this world is not easy. The life of following Jesus means that we face difficult choices and challenging decisions. When you're tempted to give up and take the easy road, see how Jesus stayed on the most difficult path for you.

The people of his day had trouble with that. Perhaps in part because of their proximity to the situation and because their culture had so veiled the gospel vision of the Messiah. But as Jesus pondered the journey ahead, he was moved to lament, **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!** It wasn't for lack of effort or desire on Jesus' part that the people of Jerusalem, the Pharisees in Galilee and Perea, and most of the people of his day failed to trust in him. We could go back through chapter after chapter and verse after verse of Jesus revealing his love and compassion, pointing out sin and calling to repentance, and breaking down false pride in work-righteous ideas. The gospels highlight them all. And these were calls to turn from sin and sinful ideas and trust in the Christ who stood before them.

And matching chapter for chapter and verse for verse is the rejection of the Jewish people. Crowds had gathered on the hillside near Galilee when Jesus fed the huge crowd with five loaves of bread and two small fish. Yet when Jesus told them that he was the bread of life that could eat and live forever, many turned back and no longer followed him.

(John 6:66) When Jesus longed to give them shelter and security under his protecting wings, the people chose to go it alone, facing temptation and spiritual danger on their own and they ultimately lost.

Left to themselves, their house was desolate. Barren. Empty. Fruitless. Such is the life lived apart from Christ. For them, Jesus mourned. His heart is exactly that as his Heavenly Father, who wants all people to be saved. It pains him that any would be left out of the blessings and benefits which his coming death would win for all. You can hear it in his voice, can't you? Jerusalem, Jerusalem.

Left to ourselves, we too would soon feel an emptiness and find of life of fruitless waste. Look around in the world. How many times have you lamented the chaos of the times in which we live? Chaotic world events that show how many live without Christ. Chaotic times here in our own country that show how many have no idea about what Jesus has done, what it means and what he holds out to them. Chaotic times in the church such that we speak without a clear voice of who Jesus is and what it means for all people. Still today Jesus mourns for those who reject him and live out that rejection everyday.

But there's hope. And it's for that reason that we continue to exist and work, that we might have an impact. And it's not just formal things we do, you make an impact for good or for ill everyday as you live in the world. Are you leading others to know Jesus? If they saw you in the grocery store, the library or the ballgame, would they see someone who stands out as Jesus did, or someone who blends in with the world? Do you reflect his love and his heart of compassion for the lost or are you self-absorbed?

Maybe it's your unchurched neighbor whose resisted your every invitation. Get looking for opportunities to encourage them. Maybe it's your spouse who has shown little interest. Keep being a faith-filled example. Maybe it's your friend who chides you for wasting your time. Keep the communication lines open. And above all continue to pray. Pray boldly for the window and that the power of the gospel and your witness might someday bear fruit even if it's unbeknownst to you. Pray as Jesus did, recognizing the danger of a life lived apart from him and his gospel. See Jesus resolve in going to Jerusalem. In the face of such rejection and opposition, he could have taken a detour. But he didn't out of love for you and a world of lost sinners he journeyed resolutely. May we find strength in his resolve to proclaim his love to all people.