

**2nd Sunday on Lent**  
**Luke 13: 31-35**  
**Jesus Laments over Jerusalem**  
**March 13, 2022**

Since Chapter 9, verse 51, Luke, has been telling us about Jesus determination to go to Jerusalem to die. "When the days drew near for him to be taken up, he set his face towards Jerusalem." In Luke's version of the Gospel, Jesus will finally reach Jerusalem in chapter 19.

For now we are still in chapter 13 in the middle of Luke's travel narrative. Some Pharisees came to warn Jesus that King Herod wanted to kill him. It's not entirely clear if these Pharisees were offering a sincere warning or just trying to get him to go away from there. I like to think these were moderate Pharisees, like Gamaliel from Acts of the Apostles chapter 5, who, when the others wanted to have the disciples killed cautioned restraint telling them to leave them alone. His argument was, if the stories of Jesus being the Messiah were fake then the whole movement would die out. There had been many claims of messiahship and all had fizzled out. But if it was true, and he had been sent from God, then nothing they could do could stop God's plan. So they should leave things alone and wait to see what happens. Perhaps it was men like these that had warned Jesus.

However, Jesus was undeterred by the threat of death from Herod, he knew God's plan would be fulfilled. Herod was a pretender king who had inherited his position from his father. His father was a vicious brute who had been put in place by the Romans to manage the occupied territory. That was the King Herod who had sent the soldiers to kill all the innocent baby boys two and under, living around Bethlehem. This *lovely* family had no right to the title of king.

Jesus responded to Herod's threat by saying "Tell that fox from me that I am casting out demons and performing cures.." Foxes were considered crafty, but also a pest, killing chickens and other smaller farm animals. It was a very disdainful comment. Jesus said that he was busy continuing with his work today and tomorrow - meaning for the time being. That work was about casting out demons and performing cures - that is fighting evil and healing people. And he told them he would be completed on the third day. Jesus was clearly eluding to his death and resurrection, but there is also an echo of the time, when as a 12 year old, he was found in the temple after three days of Mary and Joseph searching for him all over Jerusalem. He was found in the temple - his Father's house. The place the Messiah should be. Then Jesus said he must be on his way to Jerusalem because it was impossible for a prophet to be killed outside of Jerusalem. In this statement Jesus is referring to himself - and God's will for him, which he was obediently following. Jerusalem was the heart of Israel and where the Holy Temple was located.

Jesus then lamented over Jerusalem. It seems to me he was speaking the words of his Father - "how often have I desired to gather your children together as a hen gathers her brood under her wings, and you were not willing." Jerusalem here represents all of Israel, led astray by religious and civic leadership, Israel had ignored and persecuted the prophets sent by God to help and correct them, and even now was about to reject Jesus, the Messiah.

The image of the hen and chicks seems such a lovely one, but we shouldn't hold a sentimental image in our minds. We need to understand the horror it represents and Jesus's deep sadness. N.T. Wright says that there are stories of hens, who, when faced with fire on the farm, will gather their chicks under their wings to protect them from the flames. There have been cases reported by farmers cleaning up after a fire who have found the charred bodies of chickens, still with outstretched wings, and underneath, little chicks who had survived because of the hen's sacrificial protection. This is the image Jesus is using. This is not a cuddly image of a hen keeping some fluffy chicks warm - but of a mother hen giving her life to save her little ones.

This is a Good Friday image.

Jesus clearly loved the people of Israel and was willing to die a terrible death for them, even though he knew they would reject him. Jesus was warning the people to repent and prepare for what was coming. This was a double warning. Jesus was warning against both a worldly and spiritual threat. The solution to both was through Jesus's way of peace. His forthcoming triumphant ride into Jerusalem, as the Messiah, as the saviour of Israel, would not be in the form and posture of a mighty warrior king - he would not enter Jerusalem riding on a horse and take over the City by force. But as a peace emissary from God, on a donkey, offering peace between God and the people of Israel. This peace would lead to peace between God and all creation, if the people would only accept him and his message.

At the same time Jesus was urgently warning about physical catastrophe that would befall Jerusalem unless the people changed their approach from one of anger and violence to one of love and peace. He knew that Israel could not defeat Rome through violent uprising. They would only defeat Rome by taking on the kind of peace that Jesus was offering. He predicted that the way of violence and rejection of Jesus's way of the kingdom, - the way of peace, would lead to the destruction of the very temple and city they were so desperate to free from the Roman occupiers. This would lead to the destruction of the Temple - the place set aside for God's presence on Earth, and an end to their way of worshipping God. The temple would not be rebuilt this time. This prophesy came true in the year 70 CE. when the Roman's besieged Jerusalem and destroyed the temple and much of the city during a major uprising.

The warning was also about the terrible consequences of disobedience to God's will. Jesus had come both to teach and demonstrate God's ways - about servant leadership, about caring for the marginalized, about offering reconciliation to the outcast. In Jerusalem he showed us just how far he was prepared to go in order to effect reconciliation with God.

Jesus loved the people and desperately wanted to protect them, even though their religious leaders would get crowds of them to reject him. Jesus Christ also loves us and wants to protect us from our selfishness and disobedience to God's will. He loves us even though we often reject him and the way of the Kingdom.

During Lent we might take time to think about the ways in which we reject Jesus and Jesus's way. Sometimes our disobedience is willful, at other times it's just thoughtless. We might take time to pray for the grace to recognize our disobedient willfulness and truly

follow the path of repentance and reconciliation. These next weeks as we approach Jerusalem and Holy Week, may we prepare our hearts and minds to enter into the drama of that week, to experience the dreadful consequences of our sinfulness on Good Friday and on the third day, to rejoice and celebrate the wonder of the resurrection.

In our Eucharist, Holy Communion, we come with joy and thanksgiving to both celebrate and partake in the gift of the Resurrection. Every Sunday is a celebration of Easter - it is the Lord's Day. Even in Lent.

During Lent, on Sundays immediately following worship, we are holding study sessions on the sacraments. Following worship today, I will be giving a short talk on Holy Communion, one of the two most important sacraments of the church. I will explore the meaning of sacrament and Holy Communion, and tell you why I think this is one the most important things we do. I hope you will stay following worship to join our conversation about Holy Communion.

I pray that soon we will be able to resume celebrating Holy Communion and that we will open our hearts to sharing it with everyone who earnestly desires to receive the life-giving body and blood of our Saviour. Amen