

Written Copy: Luke 13:32-34 “Lamenting Over the Lost”

2nd Sunday in Lent
Sunday, March 13th, 2022

Text: Luke 13:32-34

³² And he said to them, "Go and tell that fox, 'Behold, I cast out demons and perform cures today and tomorrow, and the third day I finish my course. ³³ Nevertheless, I must go on my way today and tomorrow and the day following, for it cannot be that a prophet should perish away from Jerusalem.' ³⁴ O Jerusalem, Jerusalem, the city that kills the prophets and stones those who are sent to it! How often would I have gathered your children together as a hen gathers her brood under her wings, and you would not!

Exegetical Statement

This teaching takes place directly following Jesus' answer to the question "Lord, will those who are saved be few?" Jesus encourages all to strive to remain in faith, for its only by faith that they will be welcomed at the eternal banquet. Then Pharisees approach Him and warn Him to "leave right now and keep going" because Herod wants to kill Him. Jesus responds with His own command that they should leave and doing so go tell Herod (that sly fox) Jesus is not worried about or responding to His threats. Jesus will do the work the Father has given Him by continuing to cast out demons and heal those physically and spiritually suffering. This work will find its culmination on the 3rd day when He rises from the dead to completion of His work of casting out Satan and healing all mankind of the sickness of sin, death, and hell. With this work in mind, it is necessary that He head to Jerusalem where His death as the prophetic Word of God is the fulfillment of all the other prophet's deaths. He then laments over Jerusalem's unwillingness to turn to Him in faith even as He desires to gather them like a chick gathers a lost hen. Yet He will present Himself as the long-awaited Messiah on Palm Sunday (lamb selection day) when He will ride in to cries of "Blessed is He who comes in the name of the Lord". He comes as the lamb of sacrifice. But the religious leaders will refuse to accept Him as such and will therefore find their house (their city and temple the trust in) abandoned by God in its destruction in AD 70, and their souls abandoned to the place of weeping and gnashing of teeth on the Last Day.

Focus Statement:

The threats of Herod could not stop Jesus from His mission to save all of mankind. Neither can the works of man or devil. Despite Jerusalem's unbelief Jesus came and gave His life as the ransom price for all humankind. As promised, He rose on the 3rd day to complete His work of salvation given by the Father. His Word goes forth with the power of His Spirit to overcome all obstacles and save those He has chosen from before the beginning of time.

Function Statement:

Why it's important to know:

Those friends and loved ones that refuse to believe our testimony concerning Jesus cause us sorrow and lament. Do we give up hope, as if nothing can be done to bring them to faith? Is God powerless to call them back?

What the hearer should do as a result:

Just as Jesus prayed a lament over Jerusalem, we pray to God that He would do all that's necessary to bring our loved one to faith. We look for His hand to be at work in the 'Law Not Preached' as well as in the Word's of Scripture, ready to give loving and winsome witness at just the right time by God's hand at work.

Subject Sentence: Jesus' lament shows His desire that all be saved

Introduction: Those We Lament Over

One of my Seminary Homiletics Professors (Homiletics being the subject of sermon preparation, writing, and delivery), Peter Nafzger, tells this story from his time as a Parish Pastor. It concerned one of the first couples he married. Both the bride and groom to be came to his congregation through a road littered with brokenness and problems. They both embraced the faith that was read, taught, preached, and given in the Sacraments. When he married them, he had high hopes that they would live out that faith and love Christ had poured into their hearts through the Gospel. The wedding itself had its own share of problems, but a strong love and faith relationship can certainly overcome those types of things. Only the problems that arose at their wedding didn't go away with the honeymoon. Throughout their first year of marriage these problems intensified. When Pastor Nafzger offered to come alongside them and walk with them, giving spiritual counseling, they treated his offer with indifference and increasing distance. Before long, their relationship with the Church became lifeless and distant, just as their relationship with each other was becoming. Professor Nafzger said one of the hardest things about this personally for him was that their house lay in between his own and the Church he was serving. He said every day, going to and from Church he walked past their house and was reminded of this couple that he felt he had failed as their pastor.

If we're honest we all have those friends and loved ones for whom our heart goes out to. Perhaps they grew up in the Church but left it behind as well as their faith in adulthood. These can be children and grandchildren, nieces and nephews; we saw them baptized and confirmed, but they now no longer have a faith relationship with Jesus, or the one they claim to have is suspect, since they have no time in their schedules to worship Him and study His Word. And there are those whom, despite our witness have never set foot in the Church. Instead of hearing from God's own mouth who He is and what He has done for them as given in Scripture, they choose to worship a god of their own design and faith; a god that our culture would be very comfortable believing in; a god that is far removed from the LORD God.

We worry over them, and our heart cries out for them, because we know what is on the horizon. We see what is going on in the world, and we remember that Jesus told us these current problems and calamities we now live in would happen. And as these words of Jesus came true, we also hold fast to His promise that He will come again. And when He comes what will be the fate of those who do not share our faith in Him? At His coming in Judgment, or on the day of their death, will their fate be that they are lost forever? Will they appear before Jesus and say to Him (Luke 13:26b-28), ^{26b} **'We ate and drank in your presence, and you taught in our streets.'** ²⁷ **But he will say, 'I tell you, I do not know where you come from. Depart from me, all you workers of evil!'** ²⁸ **In that place there will be weeping and gnashing of teeth,**

What Does Jesus Lament Mean to Us?

Luke 13:34 O Jerusalem, Jerusalem, the city that kills the prophets and stones those who are sent to it! How often would I have gathered your children together as a hen gathers her brood under her wings, and you would not!

As scary as that scenario I just told you is, take heart in what Jesus is saying over Jerusalem. This is a city that has a history of actively turning away from God's Word as sent to them by prophet after prophet. This is the same city that was ready to kill the Prophet Jeremiah in our Old Testament Lesson. And why did they want to do that? Because he was telling them word for word the warnings of the LORD God; that if they didn't change the way they thought and acted, if they didn't repent, their city and its temple would be destroyed, many would be killed, and the rest taken away to Babylon in captivity. They didn't listen and it happened just as God promised. Sixty years later they came back a changed and faithful people. But that didn't last. Generations later we see Jesus considering this city's state of unbelief. He sees them worshipping a new god: themselves and their works; what they do to be right before God instead of looking to His mercy and grace through the sacrificial system.

But hear what Jesus says in this lament. Although they may give up on Him, He never gives up on them. He says, "How often, how many times did I send my prophets to you with the express purpose of calling you back to faith in me; of gathering you tenderly into my arms of faith and protection just like a hen reaches out and gathers her chicks under her wing". And now He is coming in person to present Himself as the Messiah, the Lamb of God that takes away the sin of the world. The problem is not that Jesus, or His prophets are unwilling or unable. The Gospel goes forth with the presence and the power of the Holy Spirit to change hearts and minds, to move unbelievers to repentance, and to call those who are straying away back in repentance. The problem is with them. It's because they can and do choose not to hear, not to believe, not to repent and turn. Any and all who wind up with that eternity of weeping and gnashing of teeth have only themselves to blame.

Luke 13:31-32 ³¹ At that very hour some Pharisees came and said to him, "Get away from here, for Herod wants to kill you." ³² And he said to them, "Go and tell that fox, 'Behold, I cast out demons and perform cures today and tomorrow, and the third day I finish my course.

Jesus cannot and will not give up on them. Here we see the Pharisees warning Jesus to leave where He was teaching and preaching because Herod wants to kill Him. But He is not deterred. They are telling Him to "***Get up right now and go, and keep on going, or Herod will get you!***" Now we can make a case, given the history that Jesus already has had with the Pharisees, that while their motives seem to have Jesus best interests at heart, that is not really the case. Jesus had publicly warned the people not to follow the Pharisees in their false piety and religiosity. He has proclaimed them to be hypocrites, a Greek word that originally described an actor in a play, someone playing a part that is not really who they

are. Here they probably have an ulterior motive that has nothing to do with Jesus' safety. Instead they want Him to move on from here. They are really thinking "Get out of Galilee Jesus and take your false teaching with you, or we'll get Herod after you. You know Herod, the ruler of Galilee who put to death your buddy John the Baptist."

But in the scheme of things Jesus is not concerned with these Pharisee's veiled threat, or even with Herod. Jesus calls Him a sly fox, a small conniving animal that sneaks around but, in all actuality, poses no danger to Jesus whatsoever. Jesus will be brought before Herod just before He is crucified. Herod will scorn Him and make fun of Him. But it will not be by Herod's hand that Jesus will wind up on the cross.

In reality Jesus is calling the Pharisee's bluff. He is saying, "***The ones who need to get going are you. You go, and you tell Herod that no one and no-thing will stop me from accomplishing the work I've been given to do by the Father. I will continue to bring the reign and rule of God to the hearts and minds of men: continue to cast out demons and continue to heal people of all physical and spiritual diseases through the faith that is mine to give.***" He continued to do that throughout His life and ministry on this earth. And He continues to do so today despite any and all opposition presented by the devil and the unbelieving world, and even the opposition of the hard-hearted sinfulness of mankind.

Luke 13:33 Nevertheless, I must go on my way today and tomorrow and the day following, for it cannot be that a prophet should perish away from Jerusalem.'

Jesus is heading to Jerusalem. Not to escape the clutches of Herod, but because it is necessary that He go there as the final chapter in His mission from the Father to win salvation for all mankind. Jerusalem is the place where God's prophets are killed, and all of their deaths pointed forward to Him, the ultimate prophet, the Word made flesh. It is there He will perish at the hands of evil men. It is there He will suffer and die. But not because evil men or even the devil overpowered Him. Quite the opposite. Through His suffering and death on the cross Jesus overpowered sin, death, and the devil for all men, including you and me. And He finished His course on the third day, the day He rose victorious from the grave. He rose as the Father's announcement to you and to me that payment had been made in full for your sin and mine. Jesus came, died, and rose again to remove the sins that stand in the way of all men gaining eternal life.

What To Do in Our Lament

Nothing stands in the way, except the ability of sinful man to oppose to the work of the Holy Spirit in their hearts. Sinful man sometimes stands against that work for a time, sometimes for his entire life. Why this is has not been explained by God, and therefore we don't make up reasons or excuses. Instead we take to heart the persistence of God as seen in Jesus Christ. Even knowing that Jerusalem was filled with hard-hearted people, with those who would welcome Him on Palm Sunday as their king, thinking He had come to conquer the Romans, only to call for His death when He refuses to be the Messiah of their

choosing. Despite this He came to suffer and die for them and for you. He continues to come among us this day through the power of the Spirit in His Word and Sacraments to teach, and heal, and cast Satan's influence from our hearts and lives. He comes in the Gospel Message to present Himself as God's answer to sin, and to call unbelievers to faith, as well as those who are drifting away. He comes to call all back to Himself in repentance. He has called you and I to faith in order to send us out, both as His Church, and individually through our vocations, to proclaim Him as Savior of the world through the Gospel message. But we don't do this by ourselves; the Holy Spirit is always present to change hearts and minds, just as He did on the Day of Pentecost. Just as Christ didn't give up on the lost in Jerusalem, neither should we.

1 Timothy 2:1, 3-4 ¹First of all, then, I urge that supplications, prayers, intercessions, and thanksgivings be made for all people, ³This is good, and it is pleasing in the sight of God our Savior, ⁴who desires all people to be saved and to come to the knowledge of the truth.

So what should we do when we find ourselves lamenting those loved ones who have fallen away from the faith, and refuse or rebuff our attempts to witness? Paul has a great idea; pray! Pray for them. Give prayers of thanksgiving for the Gospel Message and the Spirit who has changed your life, give thanks that the Lord has put these loved ones in your circle of influence. Then ask that our Lord work on their hearts and minds. Pray that He would bring His law to bear on their hardened hearts; that He would do so through the law as it is preached and shared by you. But not just by that means alone, but by the 'Law not preached': by the troubles and afflictions of this world used by God to show the unrepentant that they cannot manage life on their own without Him. Things that cause them to cry out in frustration, and pain. Things that might turn them to you, asking how you cope with these same kinds of problems. Pray for this to happen because this can be a window of opportunity from our loving God for you to share the hope that lies within you. To share with them your faith in your loving Savior, who desires that all people be saved and come to a knowledge of the truth, including them.

Conclusion

Professor Nafzger said that every time he walked past that couple's house, he prayed for them. We should do the same every time we walk past the house of those loved ones that are lost, either physically walk past, or in our memories. We lift up prayers to the gracious God who desires all be saved including them. We lift them up to the Savior who came to heal all diseases, especially the disease of unbelief and bondage to the devil. The One who presented Himself as the Lamb of God that takes away the sins of the world on Palm Sunday, and then proceeded to complete that salvation work through His suffering, death, and resurrection. The One who promises to come again and bring with Him all who died in faith, and open for us the door to everlasting life. He is the God that doesn't give up, the Hound of Heaven who keeps seeking the lost through His Spirit working in the Gospel. We can entrust the fate of our loved ones over into His loving and powerful hands, believing that He would never allow anyone to die the day before they might come to faith. He is the One whose heart's desire is that they, as well as you, spend eternity with Him. Amen.