

Second Sunday in Lent – March 17, 2019
Good Shepherd Ev. Lutheran Church

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Luke 13:31-35 (NIV)

At that time some Pharisees came to Jesus and said to him, "Leave this place and go somewhere else. Herod wants to kill you." (32) He replied, "Go tell that fox, 'I will keep on driving out demons and healing people today and tomorrow, and on the third day I will reach my goal.' (33) In any case, I must press on today and tomorrow and the next day--for surely no prophet can die outside Jerusalem! (34) "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, and you were not willing. (35) 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.'"

In the name of our loving Savior, my dear friends:

There must be hundreds of ways to say I love you. Among the more romantic ways you might include giving roses and diamonds. A hug and a kiss are nice too. But love isn't always about romance – sometimes just holding hands or listening expresses our love. Ah and then there are those more practical ways of saying I love you – like breakfast in bed or taking care of some of the household chores for your wife without complaining or being asked. Children might show their love by drawing a picture for their moms or dads or by going to bed on time. Mom's and dads will show their love for their adolescents by taking time to talk with them, by setting limits for them and by disciplining them when needed. I'm sure each of could add many more ways of showing love to this short list.

Just as we have lots of ways to say I love you – so our Lord has many ways to show his love – just think of the wonderful way he created us and the ways he still takes care of us: richly providing all that we need. And what makes that love amazing is that even though we don't always appreciate it or acknowledge it he continues to care for us day after day. But even more amazing than this is the love of God which promised a Savior to Adam and Eve right after they listened to the Devil instead of listening to him. And that amazing love of God applies to us as well. Romans 5:8 reminds us: **God demonstrates his own love for us in this: While we were still sinners, Christ died for us.**

Our text for today provides us with some wonderful opportunities to

Theme: Behold the Savior's Boundless Love

1. In love he pressed on toward his death
2. In love he sorrowed over those who rejected him
3. In love he extends hope to those who accept him

Jesus is slowly making his way to Jerusalem at a time when his enemies had already begun to take notice of him. He was going through the various villages of Galilee where he continued to preach and to teach concerning the kingdom of God. **At that time some Pharisees came to Jesus and said to him, "Leave this place and go somewhere else. Herod wants to kill you."**

Do you notice something a bit unexpected in this verse? Does it seem odd to you that the Pharisees would come to Jesus with a warning? Why would they be concerned about his welfare? Was their warning sincere? Or might this have been a way to get Jesus to head to a place where he wasn't so popular with the crowds and it would be easier for them to get rid of him?

Most likely, what we have on display here is some of the hypocrisy for which Jesus so frequently took the Pharisees to task. In some way, their words were intended to serve their evil purposes. The political supporters of Herod had indeed been plotting with the Pharisees to kill Jesus. This of course came as no surprise to Jesus. But the plots of men will not deter him from his mission of boundless love. Fully aware of what would be in store for him at the end of his journey, Jesus expresses his willingness to love with a love that would take him to a certain death.

He replied, "Go tell that fox, 'I will keep on driving out demons and healing people today and tomorrow, and on the third day I will reach my goal.' (33) In any case, I must press on today and tomorrow and the next day--for surely no prophet can die outside Jerusalem!"

On this occasion, Jesus doesn't make any reference to the seemingly hypocritical show of concern by the Pharisees. He does however express his contempt for the sly, cunning Herod and his plots. Here's what you can say to that fox, Jesus tells the Pharisees. Let him know that I'm going to continue about my work no matter what he plans. I'll keep on driving out demons – showing Satan that his power has met its match in me. I'll heal people showing them the Lord's power and compassion for today and tomorrow – a phrase Jesus uses to indicate that he has a definite length of time to do his work. Then on the third day – at the appointed time, he would reach his goal bringing his work to completion and showing his great love for the world.

It may have been that Herod wanted to kill Jesus but it would not be in Herod's territory that Jesus would die for the sins of the world. Jesus' goal, which included his suffering, death, and resurrection; would be accomplished in Jerusalem, a city that had a reputation for killing the prophets sent by God. Again using a figure of speech to indicate a predetermined time frame; Jesus said, **In any case, I must keep going today and tomorrow and the next day--for surely no prophet can die outside Jerusalem!**

If we are to truly understand the bountiful love of our Lord; we need to realize that he willingly offered his life for our sins. His death wasn't an accident or the unfortunate result of stepping on the toes of the wrong people. Jesus indicates that he is fully aware that he will meet death in Jerusalem. This has been something that Jesus been aware of for his entire ministry. In love, he pressed on toward his death.

Think back to the early days of our Lord's ministry – just prior to his baptism. John the Baptist pointed to Jesus as the Lamb of God – lambs were sacrifices. Jesus would be the perfect sacrifice. Near the end of his public preaching and teaching ministry on the Mount of Transfiguration Jesus spoke with Moses and Elijah about his mission which he would bring to fulfillment in Jerusalem. In between those events Jesus frequently spoke about his death and resurrection to his disciples indicating his willingness to lay down his life for them.

Think of Jesus conversation with Nicodemus when Jesus said **"Just as Moses lifted up the snake in the wilderness, so the Son of Man must be lifted up, (15) that everyone who believes may have eternal life in him." (16) For God so loved the world that he gave his one and only Son, that whoever believes in him shall not perish but have eternal life."** (John 3:14-16 NIV)

Or call to mind the conversation Jesus had with his disciples after Peter had confessed that they regarded him as the Christ. **He ordered his disciples not to tell anyone that he was the Messiah. (21) From that time on Jesus began to explain to his disciples that he must go to Jerusalem and suffer many things at the hands of the elders, the chief priests and the teachers of the law, and that he must be killed and on the third day be raised to life. (22) Peter took him aside and began to rebuke him. "Never, Lord!" he said. "This shall never happen to you!" (23) Jesus turned and said to Peter, "Get behind me, Satan! You are a stumbling block to me; you do not have in mind the concerns of God, but merely human concerns."** (Matthew 16:20-23 NIV)

Even on the night of his betrayal, Jesus expressed his willingness to die as he warned Judas of the sin which was lurking in his heart. **The Son of Man will go just as it is written about him. But woe to that man who betrays the Son of Man! It would be better for him if he had not been born.**" (Mark 14:21 NIV)

Finally consider how Jesus prayed in the Garden of Gethsemane, **"Your will be done."** And after being strengthened by an angel Jesus willingly went with his enemies – even after they had been knocked flat on the ground.

Jesus lovingly laid down his life reminding his disciples (John 15:13) **Greater love has no one than this, that he lay down his life for his friends.** We can behold the Savior's boundless love as he pressed on to his death.

BUT our Savior's boundless love also showed itself when

2. In love he sorrowed over those who rejected him

Jesus explained the nature of love to his disciples this way: **If you do good to those who are good to you, what credit is that to you? Even 'sinners' do that. (34) And if you do good to those who are good to you, what credit is that to you? Even sinners do that. (34) And if you lend to those from whom you expect repayment, what credit is that to you? Even sinners lend to sinners, expecting to be repaid in full. (35) But love your enemies, do good to them, and lend to them without expecting to get anything back. Then your reward will be great, and you will be children of the Most High, because he is kind to the ungrateful and wicked. (36) Be merciful, just as your Father is merciful.** (Luke 6:33-36 NIV)

Now it's one thing to talk this way – it's another to act this way. Jesus doesn't just talk about love. He shows us that love is an action. Notice the compassion he expresses toward Jerusalem and its citizens 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!"**

Jerusalem – city of peace – that's what the name meant. How ironic that the city had the reputation of killing and rejecting the Lord's messengers of peace. Jesus urgently desired to bring salvation to Jerusalem and its people. And, to be sure some believers were there – but the vast majority followed the lead of their religious and political leaders in rejecting him. Notice the tender words – **How often I have longed** – notice the tender picture – **to gather your children together as a hen gathers her chicks under her wings.** "I've tried," Jesus said, "to reach out to you over and over again." The Gospel accounts are filled with his teachings, his miracles, and his prayers for his people. "I wanted to hold you close – to protect you from the evil foe and his vicious attacks, to keep you safe from harm, to shelter you from the storms of life, to nurture you and strengthen you with my wonderful words of peace and truth." "But alas" – "notice the result: **you were not willing.**" "You rejected what I offered." Notice the tragedy – that he came to his own and his own rejected him. (cf. John 1:11)

In Jesus' loving expressions of concern for Jerusalem – we see evidence of his love and concern for us. There is nothing about us that caused him to love us – but in his grace, he called out to us with his Gospel of peace which led us to place our hope in him. But our relationship with the Lord hasn't always been smooth. We haven't always been faithful to him. We've wandered and we've strayed – some of us farther and more often than others – but all of us have benefited from his repeated calls to repentance and his continual assurances of love and forgiveness. Still his Words: **"Come to me, all you who are weary and burdened, and I will give you rest,"** (Matthew 11:28 NIV) call out to us with his offer of hope.

Our Savior's boundless love as seen in our text for today is a love which extends hope to those who accept him. That hope is evidenced in our Lord's assurance that he will come again for all to see and to acclaim: **"Blessed is he who comes in the name of the Lord!"** To those who were listening Jesus was assuring them that his enemies and ours would not prevail. He would willingly suffer and die. But that would not be the end of the story. His crucifixion and humiliation would be followed by his resurrection and exaltation. We confess that with Words, from the Apostles Creed, on the third day he rose again from the dead, he descended into hell and ascended into heaven. From there he will come again to judge the living and the dead. We confess the hope he extends to(again with the words of the Apostles Creed) – I believe in the holy Christian Church, the forgiveness of sins, the resurrection from the dead and the life everlasting.

Our hope is based on Christ's own promises: **This is my blood of the covenant, which is poured out for many for the forgiveness of sins.** (Matthew 26:28 NIV) **"I am the resurrection and the life. He who believes in me will live, even though he dies.** (John 11:25 NIV) **In my Father's house are many rooms; if it were not so, I would have told you. I am going there to prepare a place for you. (3) And if I go and prepare a place for you, I will come back and take you to be with me that you also may be where I am.** (John 14:2-3 NIV)

While it's true that there might be many ways to say I love you – there is no more boundless love than the love of our Savior whose love took him to his certain death, whose love sorrows for those who reject him and whose love extends hope to those who accept him. Amen.