

Sermon Luke 13 31 35 2nd S in Lent Series C

Sermon: 2<sup>nd</sup> Sunday in Lent

Text: Luke 13:31-35(v. 34)

Theme: Jesus' love and plan to save everyone

Goal: Nothing could divert Jesus from His saving task

Dear Friends,

Introduction: We have two animals mentioned by Jesus in this Gospel. They don't match each other: The fox and the hen. The fox is known as a sly, crafty animal; therefore Jesus called Herod "fox". He was a clever politician. The hen is fragile and vulnerable, and an easy prey for the fox. Jesus makes use of these images to illustrate the situation He is facing. On the one hand, He was always threatened by the authorities of the church (the Pharisees) and by the civil authority; here: Herod. On the other hand, He knew that His time had not yet come, and that he had a task to accomplish that is to gather His people. He never ceased to show His love and care for the people like a hen cares for her chicks. His lament is over all who reject Him and who do not come under His wings for protection when He calls them. But His love is still faithful, in spite of the rejection. And He had to work "today and tomorrow" to save people before the last day comes.

I – The threat of Herod

Jesus was on His last journey to Jerusalem, and He was in the jurisdiction of Herod in Perea, the other side of the Jordan River. We don't know if the Pharisees were honest in warning Jesus against King Herod; or if they wanted to scare Jesus; because they were always enemies of Jesus. Anyway, Jesus made use of that opportunity to prophecy what would happen to Him in Jerusalem. Like Jeremiah as we heard in the O. T. reading, many other prophets were persecuted, stoned and some of them were even killed in

Jerusalem due to the rejection to their message. People were not willing to listen to the message sent by God through His prophets.

Herod had killed John the Baptist about three year before. And he mocked Jesus when Pilate sent Him to be judged by Herod (Luke 23:6-12). The answer Jesus sent to the King shows that Jesus was aware that *He had a task that must conclude in Jerusalem, and no Herod will be able to divert Him from it* (ABC 1232).

## II – Jesus’ plan

*Jesus will accomplish the desire of God, not by exerting His power, but by losing His very life. He knows this and He will not be turned aside from it. Even His foes are warning him, but He does not turn aside. He has set His face to Jerusalem, to a cross, to a gruesome death and the coldness of a grave. He will not be deterred; His love will walk this road* (Phil Brandt, p. 25,26).

This sacrifice of Jesus and His determination to face it is something that the disciples couldn’t understand. We know that even Peter tried to divert Jesus from His way to the cross (Matthew 16:2). It is not easy for us to understand the sacrifice of Jesus either due to our different culture and our way of worshipping God. On the one hand, it should have been easier for the disciples than for us to understand it as they had the system of worshipping God by offering sacrifices of lambs for the forgiveness of their sins. And Jesus was presented to them as “the Lamb of God who takes away the sin of the world”. We don’t have these bloody services any more. We are worshipping God in the New Alliance, where no sacrifice is necessary because Jesus did the sacrifice once for all. But we shall not doubt about God’s plan and shall give Him thanks that He freed us from eternal death by the blood of Jesus shed on the cross. This was God’s plan. How can we criticise Him?

*Jesus was not the helpless victim of circumstances (as some say); he was a voluntary agent in an eternal plan of God for the salvation of the world, willingly proceeding toward a sacrificial death that will consummate that plan. He does what He does, not because it can't be helped, but "that the Scripture might be fulfilled" (John 19:28) (Series C. p. 94). The cross is at the heart of Jesus task, his mission to this world (Phil Brandt p. 24).*

Jesus said that "on the third day I will reach my goal". His task was "*scheduled*" in such a way that Jesus knew exactly what would happen (Series C. p. 94). There was still some work to do "today and tomorrow", this means a short time to help people in their distresses and to preach the Kingdom of God. But on the third day He would reach His goal. – We are beneficiaries of His death and resurrection on the third day and are worshipping Him in the fellowship of His children. He accomplished His goal and is offering us the result of His painful sacrifice: pardon and peace, life and hope. He even shares with us the fruits of His sacrifice in the Holy Communion, when he comes in His body and blood to enter a sacramental unity with each of us. His love is so big that He didn't only accomplish God's plan, but he is still working for our salvation through His Word and the Sacraments. The living Christ is active in saving people until He comes again.

### III – His lament

This love and kindness of Jesus helps us to understand His lament over Jerusalem: "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." Later Luke reports that, "As he approached Jerusalem and saw the city, he wept over it and said, 'If you, even you, had only known on this day what would bring you peace'" (Luke

19:41). And we know the rest of the story, how the leaders of Jerusalem rejected Jesus and he was put to death on Good Friday. Even proclaiming His victory over sin and death on Easter Sunday, not many believed in Him as the Son of God, the promised Saviour. And Jerusalem was totally destroyed by the Romans in the year 70 A.D.

Can you imagine Jesus lamenting over our city? *“Cape Town, Cape Town, how often I have longed to gather your children together...”* Maybe put your name at the beginning of that sentence... Jesus is still very concerned about those who reject Him, because they don't accept the One who is willing to give them peace and life. But the “third day” has not come to us yet. Jesus is still working through the church to accomplish His final salvation plan to everyone, proclaiming Law for repentance and Gospel for forgiveness; offering His body and blood in the Holy Communion; giving us His Holy Spirit in the Holy baptism and by the Holy Scripture to guide us in a new life. Jesus is seriously concerned about those who reject Him. He loves them and is giving them time to accept Him.

Conclusion: I love that image of the hen calling her chicks under her wings. I can see it often when I go to Mozambique, and I enjoy watching the behaviour of the hen, calling the chicks when she finds food, warning them when a cat or a flying predator comes near. And the chicks know and obey the sounds of their mother, seeking refuge under her wings.

When the pastor invites you to confess your sins at the beginning of the Service, he says: *let us take refuge in the infinite mercy of God...* We could also say: Let us take refuge under Jesus' gracious wings... as he wants to protect us like a hen protects her chicks. Don't reject, don't doubt, but believe and enjoy Jesus' saving wings. Amen.

Pastor Carlos Walter Winterle, Cape Town, 21 February 2016