

Dallas Dodd Presbyterian Church  
 LaGrange, GA  
 03.17.19

“Jerusalem, Jerusalem”

Our scripture passage today is from the book of Luke, chapter 13 verses 31-35, listen now for the word of the Lord:

**31** 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.’”

((This is the Word of the Lord)) ((thanks be to God))

Immediately before the passage, we read today, Jesus is telling parables. The one Jesus tells last is the parable of the Narrow Door. This parable is one about people knocking at the door to Heaven, after asking “who will be saved?” Jesus tells them to enter the narrow door because many others will try to enter and may not be able to get in. The context of this passage is important because Jesus often spoke of the sins of the soldiers and the people in charge of Jerusalem. He knew he would be killed for speaking against them.

Our passage explains that the Pharisees are trying to warn Jesus that Herod is looking to kill Jesus. They are trying to be helpful, maybe they don’t have enough

information yet to actually arrest him. No matter their motives, they are warning Jesus to leave Jerusalem.

Now, let me preface with the fact that I absolutely love when Sassy Jesus makes an appearance in our scriptures. Often I read Jesus' replies with a touch more sass than probably logical, but in this case, there really is a lot of sassiness. It's one of my favorite parts of the Jesus we see in this passage.

Sassy Jesus replies to the Pharisees, in a way only Sassy Jesus can. He effectively says to the Pharisees, "well, I know you want me to leave, but honestly I'm pretty busy the next couple days. But the third day, I can leave, that will be fine." I imagine Jesus simply staring at the Pharisees at this moment, begging them to argue back with him. But he answers again before they can, verse 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."

Jerusalem seems to try to cast out Jesus as often as it can. Jesus comes back time and time only to be fought and argued with. It seems like Jesus is fighting to stay in Jerusalem a lot more than Jerusalem is fighting to keep Jesus within it. Does that sound familiar? Maybe we are the Jerusalem of this passage.

My questions are these: Where are we being the Jerusalem of this passage in our lives? Where is Jesus calling out to us in frustration and despair? Why are we unwilling to let Jesus gather us in?

Where are we being the Jerusalem of this passage in our lives?

In some aspect of our lives, we are unwilling to let God change us. In some aspect of our lives, we refuse to ask Jesus to be present and teach through us. Where is that place? Take a moment, spend time thinking through the pain you may have felt when I said that sentence. There is a fair chance that we all had an immediate thought of where it could be, but maybe you weren't quite ready to be giving that up just yet. In this passage, we are being called out. We are being asked to listen to Jesus' despair and frustration.

Where is Jesus calling out to us in frustration and despair?

We hear in our scripture today that Jesus is calling out to Jerusalem in despair. Jerusalem has proven again and again that they don't want Jesus there. The leadership of Jerusalem wants Jesus killed. Maybe in this passage, the Pharisees are attempting to get Jesus to enter into Pilate's territory so Pilate can kill him. Maybe they are trying to warn him of Herod's desires because it makes the chase more fun. We don't know. But Jesus isn't actually responding with hate or anger back to the Pharisees. He is simply responding with frustration and despair. How many times has Jesus called out to us in this frustration and despair? If we remain the Jerusalem of this passage, and if we continue to allow Jesus and God to teach through us, Jesus will not be able to gather us in.

Why are we unwilling to let Jesus gather us in?

Often times, we hear Jesus' call to us and we turn away from that call. Jesus states specifically in this passage that God desires to pull us in, like a mother hen. Desire is not a weak word. It's not a word that speaks to simply *wanting* to gather us in. This is not just God's request, that we allow God- and therefore Jesus- to gather us together. Jesus has *desired* this. Often.

Why are we unwilling to be gathered? When Jesus has asked us to come to him and to let him teach, we have turned away and left him. Jesus desires to gather us in in a way a mother hen seeks to gather her chicks. It reminds me that often, we are the ones wandering from God instead of God leaving us to our own devices. And if that is the case, why are we so afraid of letting Jesus gather us in. Instead, we are actively running from Jesus and seeking other things that will gather us and make us happy.

I'm wondering what we fear when we are turning away from Jesus and when we are not letting Jesus gather us in and when we are being the Jerusalem of this passage. Maybe part of the fears we have are the obstacles we have faced in the past. We know there will be hard parts of the call God has given us. We know because we have faced them in the past. Keep in mind, up to this point in Jesus' story- he hasn't had it easy. There

were very difficult parts, just like in our lives. Think through the difficult parts of your journey. You have overcome every single one of those difficult times, and you will make it through the ones in the future.

Listen to the lectionary Psalm of today,

**Psalm 27**

**1** The LORD is my light and my salvation;  
whom shall I fear?

The LORD is the stronghold of my life;  
of whom shall I be afraid?

**2** When evildoers assail me  
to devour my flesh —  
my adversaries and foes —  
they shall stumble and fall.

**3** Though an army encamp against me,  
my heart shall not fear;  
though war rise up against me,  
yet I will be confident.

**4** One thing I asked of the LORD,  
that will I seek after:  
to live in the house of the LORD  
all the days of my life,  
to behold the beauty of the LORD,  
and to inquire in his temple.

**5** For God will hide me in God's shelter  
in the day of trouble;  
God will conceal me under the cover of God's tent;

God will set me high on a rock.

**6** Now my head is lifted up  
above my enemies all around me,  
and I will offer in his tent  
sacrifices with shouts of joy;  
I will sing and make melody to the LORD.

**7** Hear, O LORD, when I cry aloud,  
be gracious to me and answer me!

**8** "Come," my heart says, "seek his face!"  
Your face, LORD, do I seek.

**9** Do not hide your face from me.  
Do not turn your servant away in anger,  
you who have been my help.  
Do not cast me off, do not forsake me,  
O God of my salvation!

**10** If my father and mother forsake me,  
the LORD will take me up.

**11** Teach me your way, O LORD,  
and lead me on a level path  
because of my enemies.

**12** Do not give me up to the will of my adversaries,  
for false witnesses have risen against me,  
and they are breathing out violence.

**13** I believe that I shall see the goodness of the LORD

in the land of the living.

**14** Wait for the LORD;

be strong, and let your heart take courage;

wait for the LORD!

As we hear in this Psalm, we have absolutely nothing to fear because God is standing with us, and we don't have any foes that can defeat God. Also, God knows what will happen in our day to day life. God already knows the parts of our lives that we are trying to hide from God. In fact, Jesus already knew what would happen when he was talking to the Pharisees in this passage. Many scholars say he was referencing his resurrection when speaking about the 3 days in this passage. Jesus says, "I will keep on driving out demons and healing people today and tomorrow, and on the third day I will reach my goal." Jesus has reached his goal. And now, we wait for Jesus, in this time of Lent to reach his goal on that third day. And as we wait, we are asking God: "Teach me your way, O LORD, and lead me on a level path because of my enemies.

**12** Do not give me up to the will of my adversaries,

for false witnesses have risen against me,

and they are breathing out violence."

The important thing to remember is that Jesus is not one of those adversaries. Jesus is not one of the people who is fighting against us. As we have seen in our passage from Luke today, Jesus is actively calling out to us to let him gather us in. We can't react in fear or try to run away from him. As we are in this time of Lent, we can try to focus on the calls to gather us. We can spend time working through where we are actively running from Jesus and why we are being the Jerusalem of the passage in Luke.

Please pray with me:

God,

You have called us together and you are asking us to be present in that call. All too often we are insisting you leave us and we are resisting your calls to gather us. Help us recognize that we have nothing to fear when you are on our side, and we are able to find you anytime we are looking for you.

In your most holy name,

Amen.