

## **Luke 13:31-35**

<sup>31</sup>In that very hour, some Pharisees came to him and said, “Leave, and go away from here, because Herod wants to kill you.”

<sup>32</sup>He said to them, “Go tell that fox, ‘Look, I am going to drive out demons and heal people today and tomorrow, and on the third day I will reach my goal. <sup>33</sup>Nevertheless, I must go on my way today and tomorrow and the next day, because it cannot be that a prophet would be killed outside Jerusalem!’

<sup>34</sup>“Jerusalem, Jerusalem, the city that kills the prophets and stones those sent to her! How often I have wanted to gather your children together, as a hen gathers her chicks under her wings, but you were not willing! <sup>35</sup>Look, your house is left to you desolate. I tell you, you will not see me until the time comes when you will say, ‘Blessed is he who comes in the name of the Lord!’”

## **Fearless**

### **I.**

The warning comes. Someone is after you. It’s not that they’re after you to boycott your business, harmful though that might be to your livelihood. It’s not a threat to ruin your reputation, whether with false accusations or true things from your life that might hurt you professionally or personally.

No, the threat is much more visceral than that. It’s a threat against your very life. Someone wants to kill you. A threat like that would make your heart skip a beat—or two or three. Your head would be on a swivel. Where might the threat come from?

Maybe a couple heartbeats after hearing the threat, you also consider the source. Is the one who told you credible? Might that person or group have an ulterior motive in bringing such a threat to your attention? If the threat is determined to be real, other questions arise. Who can you trust now? Who might immediately be suspicious?

Long before today’s Gospel reading, Luke had reported: “When the days were approaching for him to be taken up, Jesus was determined to go to Jerusalem” (Luke 9:51, EHV). Jesus was in the middle of that journey, teaching his disciples all along the way. He knew that when he reached that destination he would face the closing chapter in his work of saving all people from their sins.

Now, along the way, the warning came. “In that very hour, some Pharisees came to him and said, ‘Leave, and go away from here, because Herod wants to kill you’” (Luke 13:31, EHV).

What was the ulterior motive of the Pharisees? Were they really trying to be helpful? They had plotted and schemed against Jesus for some time. Repeatedly they had challenged him; they called his credibility into question.

It would seem that there were two options open to Jesus. One was that he would be so filled with fear at their warning of an attempted assassination that he would detour his trip and not go to Jerusalem at all. That option would appear cowardly to his followers, and would accomplish one of their aims—discrediting Jesus. The other option was that Jesus would continue his journey, despite fears for his life. There was a real possibility that he would be killed if he followed option two. That would suit them just fine; Jesus’ changes to the religious establishment they occupied would be over, once and for all.

## II.

Most likely you haven't faced any credible threats against your life. But you *do* face threats to your faith every day. Are there some that make you afraid? Christian values aren't very popular in today's culture. Maybe you fear being ostracized if you are too open with your faith, or that you will be mocked if you see Jesus and church as important.

Those threats are real. Earthly power *always* opposes God's kingdom. What is your reaction to such threats to your faith?

Jesus said to the Pharisees: "Go tell that fox, 'Look, I am going to drive out demons and heal people today and tomorrow, and on the third day I will reach my goal. <sup>33</sup>Nevertheless, I must go on my way today and tomorrow and the next day'" (Luke 13:32-33, EHV).

Jesus' head isn't on a swivel. He isn't looking to identify possible sources of the threat, he knows where the threat is coming from. He knows how powerful Herod is. He knows that Herod stands in total opposition to God's kingdom. He also knows what the consequences *will* be—not just *might* be.

Jesus gives no thought to a detour, or a change of destination, or even modifying his itinerary along the way. "I'll keep on preaching and teaching, just as I have done," he says. "I'll keep on healing people and driving out demons."

Are you that bold? Do you go on defending your faith in the face of pressure to back down or to keep quiet? There might be consequences. People might avoid you; they might outright mock and ridicule you. You're fearful about what kind of opposition you might face, and you doubt God's protection.

Often, backing down or backing away doesn't take any pressure at all. In today's Second Reading Paul said: "To be sure, many walk as enemies of the cross of Christ... <sup>19</sup>Their end is destruction, their god is their appetite, and their glory is in their shame. They are thinking only about earthly things" (Philippians 3:18-19, EHV). Things that aren't even bad, in and of themselves, start to create pressure. Your work schedule is intense. Besides work, there is your family; it often feels as though they get the short end of the stick; you want to spend more time with them. Then there are hobbies and interests. The next thing you know, God starts dropping further and further down the list of priorities.

## III.

"It cannot be that a prophet would be killed outside Jerusalem!" (Luke 13:33, EHV). Cheers would erupt along the road as Jesus entered Jerusalem triumphantly on Palm Sunday. So many people would be so happy. Their chants would be the exact words that would proclaim Jesus as the long-promised Messiah. They would praise God for finally sending the One who would come in the Name of the Lord to do what the Lord had sent him to do—to redeem his people from their sins.

"Jerusalem, Jerusalem, the city that kills the prophets and stones those sent to her!" (Luke 13:34, EHV). The cheers of Hosanna, God save now, would quickly fade. The chief priests would send instigators out among the crowds to turn attitudes against Jesus, until "Crucify, crucify!" was all that could be heard.

Herod's threat was real. Jesus knew it, but he continued fearlessly on toward Jerusalem. His execution wasn't just a possibility, it was a necessity. To pay for the sins of the world, he had to die. It was all part of God's plan.

"Jerusalem, Jerusalem, the city that kills the prophets and stones those sent to her! How often I have wanted to gather your children together, as a hen gathers her chicks under her wings, but you were not willing!" (Luke 13:34, EHV).

Even in the face of rejection, Jesus showed unconditional love to those living in

Jerusalem. He longed to gather those very people together, just as a mother hen protects her chicks from impending danger.

Paul writes to the Romans: “God shows his own love for us in this: While we were still sinners, Christ died for us” (Romans 5:8, EHV). Our attitudes are often like those of the mob in Jerusalem. One day we’re happy to shout “Hosanna!” and the next, we’re chanting “crucify,” along with everyone else. We were among the sinners for whom Jesus stretched out his arms on the cross.

Did it grab your attention when Jesus said: “On the third day I will reach my goal” (Luke 13:32, EHV)? Death on the cross while carrying the sins of the whole world would be painful. It would be beyond anything we can imagine. God the Father abandoned God the Son, as he was treated as sin itself to suffer the punishment of hell in our place.

But Jesus wouldn’t stay in the grave. His resurrection would demonstrate that God accepted the payment he made on the cross for you and me and all people.

#### IV.

Because Jesus died for our sins and rose again, we no longer live in fear; we live fearlessly. Trust in the salvation Jesus won for you on the cross.

“I tell you, you will not see me until the time comes when you will say, ‘Blessed is he who comes in the name of the Lord!’” (Luke 13:35, EHV).

Those words are from Psalm 118. They were the very words echoing from the streets on Palm Sunday as the people welcomed Jesus in to Jerusalem. We will sing those words in a few minutes as we prepare to receive the body and blood of our Savior in, with, and under the bread and the wine in the Sacrament of Holy Communion.

“Blessed are you who come in the name of the Lord” to his Word and Sacraments again and again for the strength you need to live fearlessly. Live fearlessly in the Lord Jesus until the day he returns for you and me and all believers, when he will gather us into his eternal kingdom, just as a hen gathers her chicks under her wing. Amen.