

Our Sorrowing and Persistent Savior

2nd Sun. in Lent – 03/16/25 – Mt. Calvary Luth.

Text: Luke 13:31-35 Pastor Keith Besel

v. 33-34, [Jesus said,] “...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. O Jerusalem, Jerusalem... How often would I have gathered your children together as a hen gathers her brood under her wings, and **you would not!**”

Introduction

- ✘ As the apostle Luke pulls you and me along with him and Jesus and the other disciples into Jesus’ legendary journey today, he gives us a very important and helpful glimpse into the heart; into the soul of our beloved Savior.
 - ➔ At the same time we pick up additional clues as to the circumstances that surrounded Jesus here on the threshold of His entering into the climax of His earthly ministry.
- ✘ You and I talk and hear others lament that these are difficult and perilous times in which we live today, right? But honestly, folks have been saying this about the circumstances of their surroundings throughout the annuals of time.
 - ➔ Jesus is living in a terrifying time, here in the relationship between Him and the Jewish religious leaders – the Pharisees in this particular text today, as well as the threats against Him from the secular ruler, King Herod Antipas – Herod the Great’s son.
- ✘ Satan of course, has no desire for Jesus to ever get to His pre-determined destination – Jerusalem. No, the devil is hard at work, behind the scenes, using the Pharisees to try and breed fear and apprehension within Jesus; trying to get Jesus to give up His appointed mission as God’s promised Messiah and Savior of sinful souls.
 - ➔ “Get away from here,” they say (that’s either from Galilee north of Samaria and Jerusalem, or from Perea, the region east of the Jordan River and also a distance north of Jerusalem) ... “Get away from here, for Herod (Antipas) wants to kill you” (v. 31).
 - ➔ They are likely trying to scare Jesus, so that He will leave and go into hiding somewhere, and thereby derail Jesus from His appointed path.
- ✘ But despite Herod; despite the Pharisees; and despite the stubbornness and rejection of so many sin-filled souls in every era of mankind, we have here in this text today a clear picture of our Savior.
 - ➔ We see that this universal refusal of men to listen to, and follow Him brings Him great sorrow, yes. But it also solidifies His resolve so that He persists in His efforts to gather the souls of all mankind to Himself for our salvation.
 - ➔ This means, my fellow people of God, that Jesus is both *Our Sorrowing and Persistent Savior*.

I. Divine Sorrow

- ✘ Let’s briefly explore those two attributes of Jesus as we walk with Him on His journey to the cross.
- ✘ Initially, the concept of God experiencing sorrow might put us off a bit. And that’s because our earthly culture has perverted things like sorrow and grief; shedding tears and the like, turning them into something that is a sign of weakness. “Real men don’t cry,” many of us might have been told. “A strong woman never lets her emotions show,” is another flawed cliché.

- But when God created mankind in His own image, He gifted us with an entire array of emotions.
- ✘ We even have examples of God's own emotions in Holy Scripture. In Genesis 6:6, for instance, when Yahweh saw how utterly corrupt people had become at the time of Noah, we are told that He "was sorry that He had made man on the earth, and it grieved Him to His heart."
 - We also hear this in Ezekiel 33:11: "...As I live, declares the Lord Yahweh, I have no pleasure in the death of the wicked, but that the wicked turn from his way and live; turn back, turn back from your evil ways, for why will you die, O house of Israel?"
 - And when Jesus' good friend Lazarus died, even though Jesus knew He was going to raise Lazarus back to life, we are told in John 11:35, that "Jesus wept" when He came to the tomb; when He saw before Him the ultimate consequences of our sin.
 - ✘ So we shouldn't be surprised here in verse 34 of our Gospel Reading to hear Jesus, as He reflects on the history of God's people, represented in the city of His intended destination now and He begins to cry out in sorrow, "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!"
 - There in the midst of His sorrow, you and I see a wonderful picture of Jesus' deep, abiding love for each and every soul He has created. In spite of our constant rejection and repelling of His loving attempts to bring His people out of the clutches of our sinful desires; even after the prophets He sent to help have been brutally murdered, Jesus still loves the souls He has created like a mother hen loves and cares for her brood of chicks; constantly, graciously seeking to gather them/us under the safety and protection of His powerful, protective and saving wings.
 - ✘ And that love for mankind doesn't change the closer Jesus gets to Jerusalem and His appointed time on the cross.
 - No, in fact, it only seems to grow into a more passionate and determined love. After He arrived and entered into Jerusalem on Palm Sunday, fulfilling verse 35 when He said, "I tell you, you will not see Me until you say, 'Blessed is He who comes in the name of the Lord!'", (which happened on Palm Sunday) Jesus repeated this same lament of sorrow that Tuesday as He looked across the Kidron valley upon the Temple and God's beloved city.
 - Yes, His sorrow that week even grew into righteous anger as we hear how the people's abuse of God's holy house impacted Jesus. Luke 19:45-48 tells us that "[Jesus] entered the temple and began to drive out those who sold, saying to them, 'It is written, "My house shall be a house of prayer," but you have made it a den of robbers.' And He was teaching daily in the temple. The chief priests and the scribes and the principal men of the people were seeking to destroy Him, but they did not find anything they could do, for all the people were hanging on His words."
 - ✘ Jesus' divine sorrow ultimately peaked two days later, on what we call Maundy Thursday, when Luke allows us to hear Jesus praying to God, the Father in the Garden of Gethsemane. "And being in an agony," Luke says, "[Jesus] prayed more earnestly; and His sweat became like great drops of blood falling down to the ground" (Lk. 22:44).
 - ✘ This, my dear friends, is how deeply our Lord is grieved still today when He comes to us with arms opened wide in the gifts He longs to shower upon us; the gifts He uses to cover and protect us under His wings of grace here in worship – the gifts of His perfect Word of truth; of His cleansing and saving work in Baptism; and His body and blood in Holy Communion where He feeds and nurtures us to live as His bold, faithful and loving children of faith here in this dangerous world.

→ So yes, it truly does break our Savior's heart when we find any and every reason not to be with Him, so He can care for us here in His Church, of course; but also to make Him the foundation and center of our daily lives – where we will speak to Him in prayer and listen to Him when we read Scripture and follow Him through His Spirit that lives within us since our Baptism.

II. Divine Persistence

✘ That leads us to the second trait that our Savior reveals to us about His nature today: Divine Persistence.

→ Neither Herod, nor the Pharisees, nor anybody or anything else could or would deter Jesus from completing His Father's will for Him during His time here on earth.

✘ 1 Timothy 2:4 says that God "desires all people to be saved and to come to the knowledge of the truth." And no one – from Old Testament times, New Testament times and right up to today could ever be saved unless Jesus reached Jerusalem and the cross at Mt. Calvary.

→ Yet Jesus' journey started all the way back in the Garden of Eden when that first bite was taken from the forbidden fruit and God promised that an offspring from Eve would be gravely wounded by Satan, the serpent only to have that promised Savior crush the devil's head and conquer sin and death in the place of all sinful souls.

✘ The progression of that promise throughout history never wavered as God persisted in His love for us and our sin-filled ancestors; saving Noah and his family from the flood in the ark; sending Moses as a forerunner to Jesus so that God could save His people from slavery under Pharaoh and keep His promise as he led and cared for them through a 40-year journey in the wilderness. All the while, God persisted in His love, even after that love was rebuffed over and over again by His people.

→ He pulled them under His wing; giving them manna to eat every day; bringing water from a rock at Meribah (Ex. 17:6); and directing them to place the symbol of a snake up on a pole to save them from deadly snake bites, which Jesus tells us in John 3:14-15, was to point those believers forward to the time when He would be lifted up on the cross, "that whoever believes in Him may have eternal life."

✘ Now, at the time of today's Gospel Reading, Jesus has come as God in human flesh and blood; displaying God's divine persistence in every word that He says and preaches, and with every person that He heals and embraces with His grace.

→ Yet, it was in Luke 9:51 that Jesus began to really hone in on the direction of His persistent love for us all. Luke tells us there that "when the days drew near for [Jesus] to be taken up, He set His face to go to Jerusalem."

✘ And now in verse 33 today Jesus tells the Pharisees that are trying to derail His mission, "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."

→ As we move forward here in the season of Lent, we will see and we will hear of Jesus and His grace-motivated persistence as He moves ever closer to the cross for you and me. He will be forced to testify before the Jewish Council that He is truly the Son of God (Lk. 22:70).

→ Peter will break His heart when he denies Jesus three times, but Jesus will not stop loving him, even as he hears the rooster crow (Lk. 22:61). And Jesus will stand before Pontus Pilate who offers Him a way out of being crucified if only He will deny that He is the King of the Jews. Yet Jesus persisted in His saving love, telling Pilate, "You say that I am a king. For this purpose I was born and for this purpose I have come into the world – to bear witness to the truth", that is God's truth of course. "Everyone who is of the truth," Jesus continues, "listens to My voice."

- Even as He hung, bloodied and beaten on the cross, Jesus looked down at those who nailed Him there, in great sorrow and He persisted in His love, crying out “Father, forgive them, for they know not what they do” (Lk. 23:34).
- ✘ And now, today, Jesus continues to call and gather all people to Himself; all who believe and confess Him as their only Savior and God. Yes, Jesus preserves them through all heartache and sorrow; every challenge and persecution into life everlasting.
 - Every day He gifts and feeds us with His Word and Sacrament, and He preserves His Church on earth despite wars, floods, fires, tornados, epidemics and upheavals of nations and their leaders.
 - He calls, gathers and preserves you, me and our families personally: including the accidents, sickness, business losses and gains, and difficulties we face in our personal relationships.

Conclusion

- ✘ Yes, even though, we in many ways still stubbornly resist Jesus and His love for us, Jesus remains *Our Sorrowing and Persistent Savior*, forever calling, gathering and enlightening us through the power of His Holy Spirit, and every day pouring upon us His gifts of love and grace. To Jesus be the glory today and forever. Amen.