

The title this morning's sermon is, "*Jesus Christ's Compassion for Sinners.*"

On Sunday mornings we're working our way through Luke's gospel verse by verse and we find ourselves at chapter 13, verses 31-35.

Please stand with me for the reading of God's Word.

**Luke 13: 31 At that very hour some Pharisees came and said to him, "Get away from here, for Herod wants to kill you." 32 And he said to them, "Go and tell that fox, 'Behold, I cast out demons and perform cures today and tomorrow, and the third day I finish my course. 33 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.' 34 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 were not willing! 35 Behold, your house is forsaken. And I tell you, you will not see me until you say, 'Blessed is he who comes in the name of the Lord!'"**

Let's pray.

Along with looking at commentaries on the verses that I will be preaching on, I might also try to listen to a sermon or two. Any guesses how many sermons John MacArthur had on these five verses?

Six! That's more than one sermon per verse!

I will be able to cover these verses in two sermons, but I will tell you it was not easy. There is so much about the compassionate heart of Christ toward sinners that I think I would be shortchanging you to try to pack it into one sermon. And apparently John MacArthur thought he would be shortchanging his congregation if he tried to pack it into five sermons.

I think we generally view people one dimensionally. For example, we say:

- He's friendly or he's hard to get to know
- She's introverted or she's extroverted
- He's funny or he's serious

Jesus made it near impossible to view him one dimensionally. Right when it seems like we are starting to pin him down, we encounter verses that make him look completely different.

For example, how did Jesus look in the previous verses we looked at last week about shutting the door in people's faces and sending them to hell for eternity where there will be weeping and gnashing of teeth?

He looked very severe!

Then we reach this morning's verses and Jesus compared himself to – of all things – a hen that would like to gather her chicks under her wings.

And how does this make Jesus look?

Very compassionate!

It reminds me of **Romans 11:22** which says to **consider the kindness and the severity of God.**

We definitely get to see both as we move through the Gospels.

With this in mind, let's get into this morning's verses.

Jesus was busy with His ministry when He was warned of a death threat against Him...

**Luke 13:31 At that very hour some Pharisees came and said to him, "Get away from here, for Herod wants to kill you."**

This shows that not all Pharisees opposed Jesus. There were a few sympathetic ones like Nicodemus, and these ones who wanted to protect Him from Herod.

There are lots of Herods in the Gospels. This is Herod Antipas the king of Judea, who killed Jesus's cousin, John the Baptist, and would eventually play a part in Jesus's death.

So, Jesus knew that Herod was capable of murder. Let's see how he responds...

**Luke 13:32 And he said to them, "Go and tell that fox, 'Behold, I cast out demons and perform cures today and tomorrow, and the third day I finish my course.'**

Not the response you'd expect from someone who's afraid of dying.

That's because Jesus was going to continue his mission, and he knew nobody could stop him, not even Herod.

And apparently Jesus wanted Herod to know that. He could have simply disregarded the Pharisees' counsel and quietly continued on his way, but he wanted Herod to know that he wasn't afraid of him and he couldn't stop him, so he told the messengers to go back and deliver that message to him.

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When Jesus says he will finish his course on the third day, he doesn't mean he only has three days journey left. Instead, he's talking about his resurrection from the dead on the third day.

It is as though Jesus said...

*"I am going to continue doing what I'm doing until the third day when I'm resurrected and that's when my journey is complete. Nobody is going to stop me from going to the cross, dying, being buried, and resurrected."*

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Jesus was not afraid of any danger, because He followed a divine timeline and nothing could harm him until he reached the cross. Not even Herod Antipas, one of the most powerful men in the world, posed any threat to Jesus.

Let me ask you a question that should be very easy...

Who crucified Christ?

- Jews?
- Romans?
- Us because of our sins?

**Isaiah 53:10 It pleased the LORD to bruise Him; He has put *Him* to grief. When You make His soul an offering for sin,**

This verse goes to great lengths to make sure we see who was in charge. The Father is shown to be completely responsible for what happened to His Son:

- **The LORD bruised Him**
- **He put Him to grief**
- **He made His soul an offering for sin**

The verse says the exact opposite of what we'd expect. We'd expect it to say:

- **It GRIEVED the LORD to bruise Him**
- **It PAINED the LORD to bruise Him**
- **It BROKE the Father's heart to bruise His Son**

So how could it please Him?

It pleased God because it accomplished our redemption

- If the Father punished His Son, He wouldn't have to punish us.
- If the Father punished His Son, we could become the Father's sons and daughters.

Our sins made us God's enemies:

- **Romans 5:10 We were enemies of God**
- **Colossians 1:21 You, who once were alienated and enemies...by wicked works.**
- **Ephesians 2:3 [We] were by nature children of wrath**

The only way Jesus could save us, is:

- He had to become God's enemy.
- He had to become the object of God's wrath.
- God had to treat His Son like His enemy, so He could treat us as His sons and daughters.

So not only did men like Herod not pose any threat to Jesus. They helped fulfill God's will.

**Acts 4:27** is an interesting verse describing everyone involved with Jesus' crucifixion...

**“Truly against Your holy Servant Jesus, whom You anointed, both Herod and Pontius Pilate, with the Gentiles and the people of Israel, were gathered together.**

You've got Herod, Pilate, the Gentiles and the Jews gathered together to see Christ crucified. But then it says something wonderful...

**[They] were gathered together 28 to do whatever YOUR HAND AND YOUR PURPOSE determined before to be done.**

No matter how things looked, it all unfolded according to God's plan:

- **Luke 22:22 Truly the Son of Man goes as it has been determined.**
- **Acts 2:23 [Jesus was] delivered by the determined purpose and foreknowledge of God.**

**Revelation 13:8** even calls Jesus **the Lamb slain from the foundation of the world.**

This is what's known as *Prophetic Perfect*. The idea is when God has determined something, it is so certain it's as if it's already happened. From before time began God set in motion a plan to see His Son take the punishment we deserve, and it was so certain it could be spoken of as though it had already happened.

So Jesus knew He wouldn't die until His Father sacrificed Him. He knew He was on a course set by His Father.

And the same can be said of us...and this brings us to lesson one...

**Lesson One: God has a course for our lives.**

Just as the Father had a plan for Christ, He has a plan for us.

Consider these verses so you recognize just how much of a theme this is in Scripture:

- **Psalm 37:23 THE STEPS OF A MAN ARE ESTABLISHED BY THE LORD, when he delights in his way.**
- **Proverbs 16:9 The heart of man plans his way, but THE LORD ESTABLISHES HIS STEPS.**
- **Proverbs 20:24 A MAN'S STEPS ARE FROM THE LORD; how then can man understand his way?**
- This next verse is interesting. The prophet Jeremiah points out that God directs man's steps by pointing out that man does not direct his own steps: **Jeremiah 10:23 I know, O Lord, that the way of man is not in himself, that IT IS NOT IN MAN WHO WALKS TO DIRECT HIS STEPS.** If man isn't directing his steps then who is?
- **Ephesians 2:10 For we are his workmanship, created in Christ Jesus for good works, which GOD PREPARED BEFOREHAND, THAT WE SHOULD WALK IN THEM.**

The longer I'm a Christian the easier it is to see how God directs our steps and writes our story. We can't always see it at the time, but it often comes into focus as we look back over the years of our lives:

- We see how God opened some doors and closed others.
- We see how we wanted things that he didn't give us.
- We see how we didn't want things that he did give us.

Often we can look back and see how it wouldn't have been good for us if we got what we wanted, or see how he had something better for us instead.

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The other day I was walking and talking with one of my children. I told him that no matter how hard I might try to protect him he would still be exposed to countless temptations and they would have to decide for themselves whether they would follow the Lord or the world.

It's true that we must choose to follow the Lord. But it's also true that the Lord chooses the path we follow. It's hard to understand how these truths work together, but they do.

The paths of our lives aren't so much ones that we choose for ourselves, but ones that we discover as we try to live each day submitted to Christ.

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Now before we read the following verses I want to let you know that I'm going to try to help you appreciate the Jews' sinfulness. At the end I will explain why this is so significant.

For now, look with me at **verse 33...**

**Luke 13:33 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.'**

This was a criticism that was probably said with an amount of sarcasm. Of course, there were prophets who died outside of Jerusalem, but the Jews had murdered so many prophets that Jesus could say they were all murdered in Jerusalem, the headquarters of the country...which is to say by the Jews themselves.

Briefly look back at **Luke 11:47**. Jesus is speaking to the Jews and in these few verses notice the number of times Jesus accused them of murdering the prophets...

**Luke 11:47 Woe to you! For you build the tombs of the prophets WHOM YOUR FATHERS KILLED. 48 So you are witnesses and you consent to the deeds of your fathers, for THEY KILLED THEM, and you build their tombs.**

Twice Jesus said they **build their tombs**. He meant they continue the job of killing the prophets that the Jews started in the Old Testament.

**Luke 11:49 Therefore also the Wisdom of God said, ‘I will send them prophets and apostles, some of whom THEY WILL KILL AND PERSECUTE,’**

Not only did the Jews kill the prophets in the Old Testament, they killed the apostles in the New Testament. And this brings us to lesson two...

### **Lesson Two: The Jews murdered the prophets, apostles, and Jesus.**

I know I said the Father crucified Christ. Now I'm referring to the people who carried it out.

Think of the book of Acts:

- Acts 4 and 5 Peter and John were arrested by the Jews, questioned, and flogged
- Acts 7 Stephen was arrested by the Jews, questioned, and stoned
- Acts 9, 20, and 23 the Jews plotted to kill Paul
- Acts 13 the Jews drove Paul out of Antioch
- Acts 17 the Jews chased Paul out of Thessalonica
- Acts 21 Paul went to Jerusalem, was arrested by the Jews, and then rescued by Roman soldiers...imagine that! He was in more danger from Jews than Gentiles.

So Jesus says...

**Luke 11:50 so that THE BLOOD OF ALL THE PROPHETS, shed from the foundation of the world, may be charged against this generation.**

When Jesus says **charged against this generation** it almost sounds unfair, as though they're held responsible for the sins of the earlier generations that killed the prophets.

Instead, He means God has had enough and this is the **generation** He will punish for all the centuries of sin...it will be **charged against [them]**. This is the generation that experienced the Romans conquering Jerusalem in 70 A.D., slaughtering thousands of Jews, and destroying the temple.

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And Jesus preached parables about this. Turn to **Matthew 22**. Listen to these verses from the Parable of the Wedding Feast...

**Matthew 22:2 “The kingdom of heaven may be compared to a king who gave a wedding feast for his son, 3 and sent his servants (the prophets) to call those who were invited to the wedding feast, but they would not come...6 while the rest seized his servants, treated them shamefully, AND KILLED THEM.**

It would be insulting enough to reject the invitation to the banquet, but they even murdered the messengers who invited them.

So how did the king respond?

**Matthew 22:7 The king was angry, and he sent his troops and destroyed those murderers and burned their city.**

Again, this is referring to the Romans conquering Jerusalem in 70 A.D.

You say, “I thought this was about Christ's compassion for sinners. This doesn't sound very compassionate?”

This is a reflection of Christ's compassion, because this judgment had not taken place yet. By preaching this parable he was warning them about what would happen if they didn't repent.

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Now speaking of the prophets, listen to this verse...

**Acts 10:43 To [Jesus] all the prophets bear witness.**

In other words, all the prophets prophesied about Christ.

Now if the prophets prophesied about Christ, and the Jews murdered the prophets, it makes sense they would also murder the Christ.

So the Jews in Jesus's day were even worse than the Jews in the Old Testament:

- The Jews in the Old Testament murdered the prophets who prophesied of the Messiah
- But the Jews in Jesus's day murdered the Messiah the prophets prophesied of

And Stephen said the same thing...

**Acts 7:52 [Stephen said], "Which of the prophets did your fathers not persecute? And they killed those who announced beforehand the coming of the Righteous One, whom you have now betrayed and murdered."**

Stephen went beyond accusing them of murdering the prophets. He also accused them of murdering Jesus.

They were so angry when he said this that they proved how murderous they were by murdering him.

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Briefly turn to **Luke 23:20**...

**Luke 23:20 Pilate addressed them (the Jews) once more, DESIRING TO RELEASE JESUS, 21 but they kept shouting, "Crucify, crucify him!"**

Incredibly – you wouldn't believe it if it wasn't written here – the ungodly governor Pilate tried to release Jesus, but the Jews wouldn't let him!

Three times he tried! Look at **verse 22**...

**Luke 22:22 A THIRD TIME he said to them, "Why? What evil has he done? I have found in him no guilt deserving death. I will therefore punish and release him." 23 But they were urgent, DEMANDING WITH LOUD CRIES THAT HE SHOULD BE CRUCIFIED. And their voices prevailed.**

It is simply unimaginable. It could bring you to tears thinking about how evil the Jews were:

- They murdered the prophets throughout the Old Testament.
- They murdered Jesus in the Gospels.
- And even after Jesus was resurrected and shown to be the Christ, they murdered the apostles and other Christians, such as Stephen, in the book of Acts.

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Now here's why I'm telling you all this...

Based on the Jews' behavior, what would you expect Jesus to say to them?

I would expect him to say:

- *You are so stubborn, stiff-necked and rebellious you should be cast into hell.*
- *You are the wickedest group that has ever lived, I can't believe you were chosen to be God's people.*

Or maybe we would expect Jesus to quote one of the imprecatory Psalms, such as: **Psalm 35:6 O God, break the teeth in their mouths.**

Instead, turn back to **Luke 13:34** to see how Jesus spoke to them...

**Luke 13:34 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 were not willing!**

I read this and I think, “You have got to be kidding me.”

This must be one of the most dramatic demonstrations of compassion in all of Scripture. To think that Jesus could say this to the Jews knowing all they had done to his messengers and all they would do to him is almost unthinkable.

If you were Jesus, and you knew Jerusalem was the place that murdered your messengers and where you would be arrested, beaten, and killed, what would you have to say about that city?

Instead, we see this loving and tender response from Him. He wanted to protect, nourish, and cherish the people who would murder him...like a mother bird protects her young chicks.

Jesus had compassion for sinners even with full knowledge of their sins...and this brings us to lesson 3...

### **Lesson Three: The Jews' sins reveal Christ's compassion for sinners.**

There are some places in Scripture that make God look particularly compassionate:

- When he had mercy on King Ahab
- When he forgave King Manasseh
- When he forgave the Ninevites

And I think Jesus's compassion to the Jews needs to be added to this list.

It would be one thing if Jesus said these words to his disciples or people who tried to follow him. But he said it to Jews whom he knew were going to murder him.

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Here's what I'd like you to focus on...

The Jews' sinfulness is hard to believe, but Christ's compassion toward them is even harder to believe.

We could marvel at the way the Jews' treated Christ, but we must marvel even more at the way Christ treated the Jews.

This is the verse that came to mind for me...

**Romans 5:20 Where sin increased, grace abounded all the more.**

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When I was reading all those verses about the Jews' murdering the prophets, apostles, and Christ, you could easily have asked...

*“Why go into so much detail? Do we have to talk that much about how sinful they were?”*

Let me be clear about why I thought that was so important by asking you to think about something.

What if I said, “Jesus was compassionate to...

- Noah
- Or Samuel
- Or Daniel

What would you say?

You would say, “*Big deal. Why wouldn't he be compassionate to them? They were great.*”

But when you see Christ's compassion to people who were this sinful you can't help but be moved by it.

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Let me share an illustration with you that I used once before when discussing Manasseh's life, because I think he similarly shows the Lord's compassion for sinners.

Katie's never really been into expensive jewelry...which is why I married her 😊.

Even though I've never taken Katie to any fancy jewelry stores, I know this is what they do: they take out the diamonds and lay them on a dark, black velvet background.

Why do they do that? It brings out the beauty of the diamonds.

Do you see how the Jews' sinfulness is the black velvet background that brings out the beauty of Christ's compassion for sinners?

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Now earlier you heard me say the Romans conquered Jerusalem in 70AD, so you know that they were not recipients of the Lord's compassion in the near future. They were recipients of his judgment. Next week, we'll talk about why that was the case.

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For now, I want to close with this...

This is a very encouraging account. It greatly blessed me, and I hope it blesses you too.

But this account also carries with it a very heavy burden, and the burden is this...

When you see Christ's heart for the Jews you see that nobody could ever be completely beyond Christ's compassion.

Basically, I would say the burden is this...

We're left without excuse!

This account prevents any of us from ever saying:

- “*God could never forgive me.*”
- “*God could never love me after what I've done.*”
- “*My past sins have turned God against me.*”
- “*My history of being hostile toward God has made him hostile toward me.*”
- “*He's done with me...He wants nothing to do with me.*”
- “*I have done too much for God to ever have compassion on me.*”

If Christ can have compassion on the Jews in his day who would call out for his crucifixion, he can have compassion on us.

If the Jews' past – and even future – sins didn't turn Christ against them – if He could still say to them, **“How often would I have gathered your children together as a hen gathers her brood under her wings,”** – it is doubtful that we have done anything that could turn Christ against us.

If you have lived in rebellion to God, or you believe you have done things that would prevent him from loving you or wanting a relationship with you, think about how the Jews treated Jesus and then go back to these verses and look at his compassion for sinners.

As long as we're still taking breaths, we can repent, turn to Him, and he would gather us under his wings.

Let's pray.