

August 4, 2018  
Sunday Morning Service  
Series: Luke  
Community Baptist Church  
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Greer, SC 29650  
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## THE PREACHERS' GRAVEYARD Luke 13:31-35

In “pastor lingo” there are churches that have established a reputation for being a pastor’s graveyard. That generally means that there is a very strong individual or family or well-settled group that makes life pretty miserable for a pastor until he leaves. One of my friends was hired by such a church. Within about six months there were conflicts at which point the chairman of the deacon board came to my friend and said, “Just remember this. We were here before you came and we will be here after you leave.” Warnings like that could tend to make a pastor feel a bit uncomfortable.

The good news is that, after a couple of generations, churches like that die out. They die because the people who take control are not interested in changes. They want things to remain the same according to their traditions and preferences. Therefore, when new people try to become part of the assembly, they are shunned and virtually driven out. The inevitable end of that is the very religious, but probably unsaved, people who are in control get older and older until they die. When they die, the organization shuts down and an antique dealer buys the building for a song and a dance and opens a new store.

We find in the Good News stories that Jesus often had to deal with people just like that. In fact, when God the Son came into this world through the miracle of the virgin birth, it had already been planned in eternity that He would ultimately go to Jerusalem to be killed. Jerusalem had a reputation for killing preachers (or as they are referred to in the Old Testament, prophets). Jesus had to be killed by the rulers of this age, in that city, in order to fulfill the promises God had made through prophets in the Old Testament.

But Jesus was not a victim like some of the preachers who have gone through the grist mill of ministry have felt they were. In fact, God the Son was completely confident about His journey to Jerusalem where He would suffer and die. He was confident because He rested completely in the Father’s will. He came to do the Father’s good pleasure, and He was under protection of the Father as long as He was doing that. No earthly king would be able to knock God’s train off the tracks.

The religious leaders in Jerusalem were notoriously bad guys. Jesus made that fact very clear. And yet, even up to the end, Jesus expressed patience and compassion toward them. In our text, we will see Jesus addressing the people who will kill Him, reminding them of how He longed to show His love and protection for them. They would not. They would reap the harvest of the deathly seed they sowed. And still Jesus loves them and one day will rule from that city.

### God the Son Planned to Die in Jerusalem (vv.31-33).

We should not be surprised to read in Luke’s account of Jesus’ ministry that wicked people tried to manipulate Jesus. Luke wrote, *At that very hour some Pharisees came and said to him, “Get away from here, for Herod wants to kill you” (v.31)*. At a particular time, Pharisees came to Jesus with a warning. It happened while He was on His way from Galilee to Jerusalem. He was teaching and preaching the kingdom of God as He promised He would do in other towns and villages. He was healing sicknesses to prove His authority and to demonstrate His compassion.

It seems most likely that at this point Jesus was in the region known as Perea (Matthew 19:1; Mark 10:1). That area was located east of the Jordan River, opposite Samaria and Judea. It was a region under the rule of Herod Antipas. We will run into that Herod fellow in a few minutes.

The phrase, *At that very hour*, has to refer to the immediate context where Jesus had just pointed out that Jews should not assume they were okay with God just because they were Jews (vv.23-30). Jesus taught in that conversation that only people who agonize through death to self, whose Master becomes Jesus, will enter the

kingdom. In fact, Jesus warned that many Gentiles would enter the kingdom of God while many Jews would not. That kind of teaching had to irritate the Jewish people in that region. We can safely assume that the majority of the Jewish people in Perea would no doubt like to see Jesus move on.

That was probably the motivation behind the apparent warning about Herod. It is well attested that the Jews living in that area hated Herod. But they hated Jesus more and desired for Him to leave. Maybe they assumed if Jesus went to Judea, and especially Jerusalem, He would come under the authority of the very powerful Sanhedrin. Many of the members of the Sanhedrin had already determined and counseled about how to destroy Jesus (Mark 3:6).

Jesus did eventually leave the region much to the detriment of the people who wanted His absence. Sin hates the presence of God. But sinners need the presence of God more than they need anything else. When God is convicting or prodding about sin in your life, the best response is to yield to Him rather than wish He would leave you. If God leaves, all hope of eternal rescue is gone.

Herod desired to kill God's Son. It probably was true that Herod desired to be rid of Jesus. He was a son of the very powerful Herod the Great. Herod the Great was an Edomite, not a Jew. His most significant wife was Mariamne, the daughter of a very important Jew from the Hasmonean dynasty. This was the Herod who tried to kill Jesus at His birth by killing all the boys in Bethlehem under two years of age. At his death in 4 BC, Herod's kingdom was divided between four sons.

Herod Antipas, one of Herod the Great's sons, ruled over Galilee and Perea. He was also known as Herod the Tetrarch, which means a ruler of a fourth. He was the King Herod all through Jesus' ministry. He began ruling in 4 BC and ruled until about AD 36. He died in exile in AD 39 having been deposed by the emperor after his nephew Agrippa accused him of plotting sedition. Agrippa was the Herod Paul dealt with.

Part of the issue between Jesus and Herod Antipas was that he had John the Baptist executed at his wife's demand. John had publicly denounced Herod for stealing Herodias, his brother Philip's wife. Herod had John arrested and kept him in prison, often calling for him to converse. Herod was a politician who understood how well

the people regarded and dared not harm John. However, the wicked king got caught in his pride and arrogance when he offered his step-daughter whatever she wanted after she had pleased him and his cronies with a sensual dance. At her mother's request, the girl asked for John's head, which Herod promptly delivered.

It appears that Herod's conscience bothered him greatly about his sin against John, even concluding that Jesus was John risen from the dead. Furthermore, because Jesus commanded a huge following, most of which came from Herod's kingdom, he feared the competition. This fear arose especially when the people kept attempting to make Jesus the king. Also, there was the continual threat of rebellion against the Roman government from these people. Any organized rebellion would cost Herod his kingdom.

So, like most powerful politicians throughout the ages, Herod would have liked to dismiss Jesus altogether. Probably the people were not far off base by saying Herod wanted to kill Jesus. But the real motivation was that they wanted Jesus to leave.

A key element of this story is the way Jesus proved again that He is more powerful than His wicked murderers. It is a bit surprising to see how Jesus showed contempt for the man who acted so powerfully. *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.'"* To call the king a fox was a serious insult. Foxes were not considered cute little creatures like your little pet Fido. Farmers built walls to keep them away because they ruined the young grape vines (Song of Solomon 2:15). They carried fleas, rabies, and other vermin. For Jesus to call Herod a fox was to attribute to him the subtle shrewdness, clever deception, and destructive character of a hated pest.

This was the only time that Jesus intentionally insulted an individual. On multiple occasions Jesus made derogatory statements about Pharisees and lawyers. But here, Jesus' disdain is clearly aimed at the man Herod. Was Jesus guilty of breaking the law? The law required: *You shall not revile God, nor curse a ruler of your people (Exodus 22:28)*. Herod was certainly the ruler of the people whether or not they approved or like it. Then again, the scribes and Pharisees, as members of the Sanhedrin, were also rulers of the people. Jesus instructed His apostles to obey their orders. *"The scribes and the*

*Pharisees sit on Moses' seat, so do and observe whatever they tell you, but not the works they do. For they preach, but do not practice" (Matthew 23:2-3).*

And yet Jesus revealed His authority to rebuke sinners like Herod and the hypocrites. God had also authorized His prophets in the Old Testament to expose rulers' sins and wickedness in no uncertain terms. God inspired Isaiah to tell the people, *Your princes are rebels and companions of thieves. Everyone loves a bribe and runs after gifts. They do not bring justice to the fatherless, and the widow's cause does not come to them (Isaiah 1:23).* Ezekiel declared regarding Israel, *Her princes in her midst are like wolves tearing the prey, shedding blood, destroying lives to get dishonest gain (Ezekiel 22:27).* John Baptist had called the religious rulers a "brood of vipers" (Matthew 3:7).

The principle must be this: On one hand, God requires us to show respect to authorities. But when authorities are committing gross sins, as the Bible identifies sin, we must expose them. And when we expose them, we do it with all due respect. The problem is that opposition to God-ordained authority is one of the traits of a rebellious generation who opposes God first. Sometimes there is a fine line between Godly, biblical exposing and arrogant, self-centered disrespect.

Jesus showed authority over manipulators. He said, *"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" (v.33).* Jesus would determine when and how to complete the Father's will regarding His sacrifice. He would not be killed on a man's terms. Observe that when the time came for His death, and when Jesus stood before Herod, He refused to answer him. *When Herod saw Jesus, he was very glad, for he had long desired to see him, because he had heard about him, and he was hoping to see some sign done by him. So he questioned him at some length, but he made no answer (Luke 23:8,9).* It is a fearful thing when Jesus will not answer. The sinner errs dangerously to presume that He is obligated to listen.

Jesus would continue to do the ministry of preaching the kingdom of God and healing day after day until He came to

Jerusalem. Jesus' goal was Jerusalem, the city of the Great God, where He would provide the price to buy sinners out of slavery to sin.

### **God the Son Shows Compassion in the Face of Death (vv.34-35).**

It is difficult for us to comprehend how Jesus could slice Herod, put up with the lies and deception of people who hated Him, and yet show compassion to them. Jesus had already stated that it was only fitting that He, being a prophet, should go to Jerusalem to die. The people of Jerusalem were notorious messenger killers.

But then hear His lament. *"O Jerusalem, Jerusalem, the city that kills the prophets and stones those who are sent to it!" (v.34a).* Jerusalem was the city of prophet killers. Jesus had previously accused the Pharisees' forefathers of killing prophets in Jerusalem (Luke 11:47). History proves that Jesus was right of course. Manasseh and Jehoiakim were especially notorious for killing God's messengers (Jeremiah 26:20-23). Extra-biblical records indicate that Manasseh was responsible for the deaths of dozens of God's messengers.

How odd that the city and the people who God had given the greatest privileges became God's greatest enemy. It is because human nature is a particularly deceptive thing. Jeremiah's assessment of the human heart proves so true day after day in our experiences. He wrote, *The heart is deceitful above all things, and desperately sick; who can understand it? (Jeremiah 17:9).* And we observe over and over that the people with the greatest privilege so often despise it.

Week after week we hear about young people who grew up in the most privileged environments where God is loved and revered, where the Bible had a central focus, where the fellowship of God's people was paramount, and worship of God was central. And yet those young people abandon all their training in godliness to embrace a life of gross sin. How does that happen? How is Jerusalem the place of death for so many prophets?

Consider the text we read in our Scripture reading this morning (Revelation 11:1-13). Even in the last days, Jerusalem will be the place of killing for the two significant prophets God sends to preach God's message. Why will God even bother?

That is just the point. Hear Jesus' compassion in the plea for Jerusalem! Compassion for sinners is why God bothers. Love for people like you and me is why Jesus pled with Jerusalem. That in spite of the fact that the people of Jerusalem were great fools. "*How often would I have gathered your children together as a hen gathers her brood under her wings, and you would not!*" (v.34b).

Jesus' lament was full of pathos as the frequent picture of wings found in Scripture attests. In those pictures, we find a demonstration of power and protection. God taught Israel that He bore His people up on eagles' wings when He delivered them from Egypt (Exodus 19:4). Ruth requested for Boaz to protect her as husband by spreading his wings over her (Ruth 3:9). The utmost protection by God was enjoyed by David who prayed, *Keep me as the apple of your eye; hide me in the shadow of your wings (Psalm 17:8)*. He exclaimed, *How precious is your steadfast love, O God! The children of mankind take refuge in the shadow of your wings (Psalm 36:7)*. *Let me dwell in your tent forever! Let me take refuge under the shelter of your wings! (Psalm 61:4)*.

This wing picture is far more than a sentimental picture. Rather it pictures the compassionate protection that Jesus longs to give us. He longs to protect us eternally from the penalty of hell. He longs to protect us in this life from the ravages of sin. He longs to protect us who treat Him so lightly, who have slight consecration to Him. And even more amazing, it pictures such love and concern for those who hate Him and abandon Him. No doubt someone would retort to that statement, "Oh, but I don't hate Jesus. I just don't want Him." To reject Christ as the only Savior who desires so much to save you from the effects of sin is to hate Him. And yet He loves you.

Not only did Jesus reveal compassion for the Jews in His day, but a simple statement revealed His compassion in the future. He warned that, for now, Israel's house is forsaken. "*Behold, your house is forsaken*" (v.35a). In a very real way this promise was fulfilled in AD 70 when Rome besieged then destroyed the city. Josephus, the Jewish historian, wrote, "The roofs were thronged with famished women with babies in their arms, and the alleys were filled with corpses of the elderly. Children and young people swollen from starvation 'roamed like phantoms through the market-places and collapsed wherever their doom overtook them.' But there was no

lamenting or wailing, because famine had strangled their emotions. Jerusalem could not bury all the bodies, so they flung them over the wall. The silence was broken only by the laughter of robbers stripping the bodies." (Josephus *Jewish Wars*, V. 5.3.)

The house is more than the city but includes the name of Israel as a nation or identity as a people. In A.D. 439, Theodosius, ruler of the Eastern Roman Empire, issued a law denying Jews the same legal rights as others. Again in A.D. 630, Byzantine Emperor Heraclitus banished all Jews from Jerusalem. Many of us knew real people in our short history who were painfully aware of the 1930-1945 Holocaust that attempted to lay the house of Israel waste completely.

But God's compassion is not exhausted yet. Still in the future they will "see." "*And I tell you, you will not see me until you say, 'Blessed is he who comes in the name of the Lord!'*" (v.35b). Jesus quoted these words from Psalm 118:26. "*Blessed is he who comes in the name of the LORD! We bless you from the house of the LORD*" (Psalm 118:26). It was what the people shouted on what we call "Palm Sunday" as they were convinced the Promised Messiah had come (Luke 19:38). But that is not the fulfillment Jesus spoke about.

There is an important key in the word *see*. It means to see the Lord for who He is. People who come to grips with who Jesus is are delighted to admit He is the one who comes in the name of the Lord. As when we see who we are—failing sinners in need of the Savior. As when we see Jesus as He is—the only Savior from sin. That idea was being carried out by Paul who Jesus called to go to the Gentiles like us, "*To open their eyes, so that they may turn from darkness to light and from the power of Satan to God, that they may receive forgiveness of sins and a place among those who are sanctified by faith in me*" (Acts 26:18).

But to *see* carries even greater implications for the future of Israel as a people group. "*On that day the LORD will protect the inhabitants of Jerusalem, so that the feeblest among them on that day shall be like David, and the house of David shall be like God, like the angel of the LORD, going before them. And on that day I will seek to destroy all the nations that come against Jerusalem. And I will pour out on the house of David and the inhabitants of Jerusalem a spirit of grace and pleas for mercy, so that, when they look on me, on him*

*whom they have pierced, they shall mourn for him, as one mourns for an only child, and weep bitterly over him, as one weeps over a firstborn” (Zechariah 12:8-10).*

That will be the day when the Lord returns to establish the actual kingdom the people rejected when Jesus was here the first time. It will be the day when the remnant of Israel will be born again like we are. *“Behold, the days are coming, declares the LORD, when I will make a new covenant with the house of Israel and the house of Judah, not like the covenant that I made with their fathers on the day when I took them by the hand to bring them out of the land of Egypt, my covenant that they broke, though I was their husband, declares the LORD. For this is the covenant that I will make with the house of Israel after those days, declares the LORD: I will put my law within them, and I will write it on their hearts. And I will be their God, and they shall be my people” (Jeremiah 31:31-33).*

Will God keep His promises through Jesus? Consider an interesting set of promises. God sent Gabriel with this very good news to Mary. *And behold, you will conceive in your womb and bear a son, and you shall call his name Jesus. He will be great and will be called the Son of the Most High. And the Lord God will give to him the throne of his father David, and he will reign over the house of Jacob forever, and of his kingdom there will be no end (Luke 1:31-33).* Now stop to consider that the promises to conceive, to bear a son, to name Him Jesus, that He would become great, that He would be called Son of the Most High were all literal promises that came to pass in a very literal way. Then why would we consider the following promises “spiritual” not “literal”? *And the Lord God will give to him the throne of his father David, and he will reign over the house of Jacob forever, and of his kingdom there will be no end.*

God keeps His promises. Jesus promised that He would go to Jerusalem and complete His work of offering the sacrifice for sin, and He did. Jesus promised that He would do it according to the Father’s timing, and He did. Jesus promised that He would not have anything to do with Herod, and He didn’t. Jesus promised that the house of Israel would be desolate, and it is. Jesus promised that one day Israel will see Him as their Savior, and they will. Jesus keeps His promises to you and to me also.