

Second Sunday of Lent

March 13, 2022

St. Luke 13:31-35:

## **“So We Can See”**

- I. How the World Sees.
- II. That Nothing Can Stop Him.
- III. So We Can See.

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St. Luke 13:31-35

Dear Friends in Christ,

We're *On The Way To Calvary*. We're continuing the journey by going back to that time when Mary and Joseph presented the infant Jesus at the Temple. We're going back to that moment when we're told:

And Simeon blessed them and said to Mary his mother, "Behold, this child is appointed for the fall and rising of many in Israel, and for a sign that is opposed (and a sword will pierce through your own soul also), so that the thoughts from many hearts may be revealed. (Lk. 2:34-35)

Can we even grasp what that was like for Mary, a new mother, to hear those words from Simeon, a man described as "righteous and devout?" And consider this: Christ walked the earth because "God so loved the world," but He knew all along that most of the world would reject Him, that one of His disciples would betray Him, that the rest of His disciples would deny Him, that the theologians of that day wanted to destroy Him.

*For God so loved the world!* We're on the way to Calvary. We know this journey must be made . . .

## SO WE CAN SEE

### I. How the World Sees.

Every now and then I find myself re-reading through an insight made a number of years ago by Lutheran professor and author Gene Veith:

G. K. Chesterton has observed how Christianity is attacked "on all sides and for all contradictory reasons." He points out how some condemn Christianity for being too pessimistic, others for being too optimistic. Christianity is said to stress sin, judgment and austerity, to be inhuman in its gloom and bleakness. Others, though reject it for its pie-in-the-sky comforts. The belief in providence and a caring God, they say, hides the true bleakness and meaningless of life. The Church is ridiculed both for being anti-female and because in Europe only women still go to church. It is criticized for its austerity and for its extravagance, for being too peaceful and for being too violent. It is attacked because it lacks unity ("None of the churches agree with each other") for being unified ("They don't allow differences of opinion"). (Gene Edward Veith, Jr., Loving God With All Your Mind, Crossway Books, Wheaton, Illinois, 2003, p. 43)

Let's try it this way: Biblically grounded Christianity isn't attacked because it says, "God loves you." It's attacked because it tells "Why God loves you." And the "Why" is because we are sinful and incapable of earning God's love, as Scriptures declare, "For while we were still weak (with sin), at the right time Christ died for the ungodly... God shows his love for us in that while we were sinners, Christ died for us." (Rm. 5:6,8)

Here are the opening words of our text: "At that very hour some Pharisees came and said to him, 'Get away from here, for Herod wants to kill you.'" (v.31) Listen, they were not concerned about His safety! They were tired of Jesus confronting them with their hellish theology and sin. They were angry and jealous because the people were drawn to Him. They were threatened by the love of God! That's how they saw Jesus. This is how the world sees Jesus. They would ultimately cheer Christ's crucifixion.

A look at history - the constant rising and falling of countries, the river of blood that flows through all the centuries, the lust for power and wealth, the lies and exploiting, a look at our own thinking and saying and doing, you name it, stamps the word SIN on all flesh! Paul writes, "...if our gospel (the Good News of God's love and forgiveness in Christ) is veiled, it is veiled to those who are perishing. In their case the god of this world has blinded their minds." (2 Cor. 4:3-4) By nature, the world can't see the love of God in Christ.

## II. That Nothing Can Stop Him.

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. 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.'" (vv. 32-33)

Indeed, we know where this is going, don't we? The Cross. His words point to the shortness of time: "I must go on my way today and tomorrow and the day following..." And His words sting: "...for it cannot be that a prophet should perish away from Jerusalem." The very name, Jerusalem, means peace. But its history is one of killing the prophets God sent to it. They didn't die by outside forces - but inside by those who claimed to be God's people.

*God so loved the world that He gave His only Son.* The "gave" points to a blood soaked Cross. Here we see the love of God manifested in Jesus' determination to see the "giving" through. "Go and tell that fox..."! We say, "Sly as a fox!", tricky, deceptive. Jesus is not a "Dr. Feel-good" unwilling to hurt someone's self-esteem.

Everything clarifies this world's want to destroy Jesus; this world's want to pursue and enjoy its deluded self-importance and supposed right to embrace godlessness! Spiritual leaders want Him out of the way. Political leaders see Him as a threat. Herod is after Him. The people chase after Him mostly because He can miraculously heal their cuts and bruises and deliver their groceries. But the odds only seem to be against Him, just as it seems today.

Jesus said, "My sheep hear my voice, and I give them eternal life, and they will never perish, and no one will snatch them out of my hand. My Father, who has given them to me, is greater than all, and no one (no one!) is able to snatch them out of my hand. I and the Father are one." (Jn. 10:27-30) They are One in essence; God the Father and God the Son.

Thus, Jesus says, "...I must finish my goal." His Goal: to pay for our sin, to assure our forgiveness and to remove all condemnation. His goal is what we heard just a moment ago, "I give them eternal life." (Jn. 10:27) His goal teaches us that the trials of life remind us of what this world is, remind us that, as the Holy Spirit had Peter write: "(you) are obtaining the outcome of your faith, the salvation of your souls." (1 Pt. 1:9) Everything He endures is for us, our faith, **so we can see that nothing can stop Him** from loving us to eternal life!

## III. So We Can See.

Our Lord Jesus closes this text with these words that speak to this world today:

"O Jerusalem, Jerusalem, the city that kills the prophets and stones those who are sent to it! How often I would have gathered your children together as a hen gathers her brood under her wings, and you were not willing! 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!'" (vv.34-35)

*For God so loved the world that He gave His only son.* We have visited those words an unknown number of times, haven't we? God walked the earth, gave Himself for forgiveness and eternal life, and the world for the most part, hates Him. It's just as we see in this text; those words of the Pharisees to Jesus are this world's words: "Get away from here." Those who reject Jesus will hear these words: "You were not willing. Depart from me!" And that will be forever.

You might recall James Hewett's account of an American tourist's visit to the renowned Polish rabbi, Hofetz Chaim. This was quite some years ago. Hewett wrote that the tourist was astonished to find that "the rabbi's home was only a simple room filled with books, plus a table and a cot." The tourist asked, "Rabbi, where is your furniture?" The rabbi replied, "Where is yours?" The tourist then said, "Mine? But I'm only a visitor here. I'm only passing through." The rabbi responded with, "So am I."

So, what about us? How do we see life? You know, it's a cold and impersonal world that really isn't all that interested in us. All the hopes and dreams that are promised are subject to abrupt change or cancellation with little or no notice. We know that by now, don't we? We've just traveled through a pandemic, which probably isn't over, to the possibility of global war. It's the *same old, same old*.

In His High Priestly Prayer, Jesus prayed, "Father, the time has come. Glorify your Son, that the Son may glorify you, since you have given eternal life to all whom you have given him. And this is eternal life, that they know you the only true God, and Jesus Christ whom you have sent." (Jn. 17:1-2) Those words are written in His blood, as Paul writes, "For I am sure that neither life nor death, nor angels nor rulers, nor things present nor things to come, nor powers, nor height, nor depth, nor anything else in all creation, will be able to separate us from the love of God in Christ Jesus our Lord." (Rm. 8:38-39) We must take those words with us into the coming days, **so we can see**, and will see Him face-to-face!

Amen.

Pastor Bill Abbott