# Second Sunday in Lent March 17, 2019

**HOW JESUS HANDLED HOSTILITY**

**(LUKE 13:31-35)**

****

31 At that time some Pharisees came to Jesus and said to him, "Leave this place and go somewhere else. Herod wants to kill you."

 32 He replied, "Go tell that fox, 'I will drive out demons and heal people today and tomorrow, and on the third day I will reach my goal.' 33 In any case, I must keep going today and tomorrow and the next day--for surely no prophet can die outside Jerusalem!

 34 "O Jerusalem, Jerusalem, you who kill the prophets and stone those sent to you, how often I have longed to gather your children together, as a hen gathers her chicks under her wings, but you were not willing! 35 Look, your house is left to you desolate. I tell you, you will not see me again until you say, 'Blessed is he who comes in the name of the Lord.'"

**Introduction**: Have you ever had anyone hate you? Someone who wished you utter harm and misery? Someone of whom you could just feel the negative vibrations coming your way? How did you react to their antagonism? Typically, hostility breeds hostility. If you are not sure of this, just read the newspaper! (How many wars have there been in the history of the world?)

Jesus was wildly popular with the people of His day. During His earthly ministry people would flock to hear Him and receive His healing touch. However, not everyone felt that way. Some people were deeply opposed to Him and had great feeling of enmity toward this “false prophet” and “Messianic pretender.”

Let us examine our Gospel reading for today and see how Jesus handled the hostility that was hurled against Him.

**I. Hostility (13:31)**

13:31 – **“At that time”** refers back to Luke 13:22 in which Jesus was going “through the towns and villages, teaching as He made His way to Jerusalem.” He did this in the province of Perea which is northeast of Judea (the province that contained Jerusalem), or the province of Galilee which is further north of Judea. **“At that time”** (*en autē tē hōra*) is more literally translated as “in that hour,” which here indicates a crucial event. This narrative in 13:31-35 marks a key turning point in this “journey to Jerusalem” narrative. Prior to this point much of Jesus’ teaching while on this journey related to Him giving warnings to the people of Israel. However, His focus after this relates to teaching His own disciples.

**“Pharisees”** belonged to a religious order or sect within Judaism which recognized the authority of the entire Old Testament, believed in the immortality of the soul and the resurrection of the body, believed in the two spiritual kingdoms (including angels and demons), and held to the sovereignty of God and man’s free will. They also believed that the Messiah and salvation would come when every Jew obeyed the entire law. This is a big reason why the Pharisees were so concerned about the sins of others. They wanted to reform, not withdraw from, society. They were very popular and well respected, because they taught the people, believed in key doctrines like the afterlife, and lived quite godly lifestyles (at least on the surface). They also had a condescending attitude toward the common people who had a limited knowledge and practice of the law, as is seen especially clearly in John 7:48-49: “Have any of the rulers or Pharisees believed on Him [Jesus]? But this people who doesn’t know the law are cursed.”

The jurisdiction of **“Herod”** covered Galilee and Perea, not Judea which contained the city of Jerusalem. If this warning by **“the Pharisees”** is true, Herod’s desire to **“kill”** Jesus was probably due to his desire to keep the peace (see Josephus, *Antiquities of the Jews*, 18.7.2), and he must have viewed Him as a potential troublemaker. Herod was last mentioned in 9:7-9 with a feeling of anxious curiosity.

This could have been friendly advice by **“the Pharisees,”** since one of their group even invited Jesus to have dinner with Him (see 7:36). However, it is more likely that they wanted to get rid of Jesus or even see Him worried about this threat to His life, since the vast majority of references to **“Pharisees”** in this Gospel have them opposed to Him (see 5:21, 30; 6:2, 7; 7:30; 11:39, 42, 52, 53; 12:1).

**** Has anyone ever told you something, which on the surface seemed to be helpful, but was really intended to get you upset and worry you? That is how gossip oftentimes works. “Let me tell you about so and so, because I know that you are so concerned about her. You may find this hard to believe but she …” Then the juicy story comes, which is usually filled with half-truths or is a bald-faced lie! Even if much of the story happens to be true, it is spoken, not to build up but to tear down. This is really a mean-spirited thing to do.

**II. Determination (13:32-33)**

13:32 – **“Fox”** was a term of contempt, indicating a person who was cunning, destructive, and insignificant. Since Jesus goes on to focus His concern and criticism for the people of “Jerusalem,” this designation as a cunning, destructive, and insignificant **“fox”** appears to fit the Pharisees more aptly that it does Herod himself!

13:32-33 – **“On the third day”** and **“today and tomorrow and the next day”** may figuratively refer to a quick succession of events rather than three literal days, since He still has much to do before reaching **“Jerusalem”** in 19:45.

The verbs **“I complete My task”** (*teleioō*) and **“I must”** (*dei*) reveal the divine plan and the divine necessity of following this plan. In other words, Jesus’ journey to the cross was no mistake or afterthought, but He was compelled to shed His blood for us.

When Jesus said, **“Surely no prophet can die outside of Jerusalem,”** He was predicting His upcoming death in Jerusalem in a rather sarcastic way. This is the fourth time that Luke has recorded Jesus making a prediction about His upcoming death (see 9:21-22, 44; 12:50).

**** How could Jesus have been so determined to die for us? His focus in one sense may be called “planned neglect,” as this story illustrates:

Someone is reported to have asked a concert violinist in New York’s Carnegie Hall how she became so skilled. She said that it was by “planned neglect.” She planned to neglect everything that was not related to her goal.

[Taken from *1500 Illustrations for Biblical Preaching*, p. 101]

True, Jesus let nothing get in the way of His journey to the cross – that was His destination for us. However, along the way He reveals His heart of compassion toward those who so desperately need Him.

**III. Grief and Compassion (13:34)**

13:34-35 – This passage is also recorded in Matthew 23:37-39, while Jesus was already in Jerusalem. Luke is probably recorded the Lord’s words at this point for topical (not chronological) purposes.

13:34 – The double vocative, **“Jerusalem, Jerusalem,”** reveals Jesus’ intensity, His prophetic mission and message, as well as His profound sorrow.

How the Jewish ancestors had persecuted the **“prophets”** include such examples as the persecution of Zechariah son of Jehoiada (2 Chronicles 24:21), Jeremiah (Jeremiah 11:21; 20:2), and the sufferers in the reign of Ahab (1 Kings 18:4).

The hostility of many Jews (represented by **Jerusalem**) is radically contrasted with Jesus’ compassion in this verse.

**“As a hen gathers her brood under her wings”** reveals His heart to have God protect, nurture, and lovingly care for His people. Imagery of God’s caring nature related to a bird is common in the Old Testament (see Deuteronomy 32:11; Ruth 2:12; Psalms 17:8; 36:7; 57:1; 61:4; 63:7; 91:4; Isaiah 31:5). For example Psalm 36:7 says, “How priceless is Your unfailing love! Both high and low among men find refuge in the shadow of Your wings.”

**** Jesus had compassion for others to the point that it really hurts. You and I are apt at times to ignore the things that really matter in life, and one reason for this is that it seems too painful or inconvenient to care. Instead, our lives can be caught up with trivial pursuits that don’t really matter all that much, as this story illustrates:

Clifton Fadiman, in *The Little, Brown Book of Anecdotes*, tells a story about Vladimir Nabokov, the Russian-born novelist who achieved popular success with his novels *Lolita* (1955), *Pale Fire* (1962), and *Ada* (1969).

One summer in the 1940s, Nabokov and his family stayed with James Laughlin at Alta, Utah, where Nabokov took the opportunity to enlarge his collection of butterflies and moths. Fadiman relates:

Nabokov’s fiction has never been praised for its compassion; he was single-minded if nothing else. One evening at dusk he returned from his day’s excursion saying that during hot pursuit near Bear Gulch he had heard someone groaning most piteously down by the stream.

“Did you stop?” Laughlin asked him.

“No, I had to get the butterfly.”

The next day the corpse of an aged prospector was discovered in what has been renamed, in Nabokov’s honor, Dead Man’s Gulch. (While people around us are dying, how often we chase butterflies!) [*Engaging Illustrations*, p. 651]

Praise God that Jesus did anything but chasing butterflies! He has chased us down with compassion and proved it by going to the cross.

**IV. Plea for Repentance (13:35)**

13:35 – **“House”** may possibly refer to the temple, but more likely refers to the people of Jerusalem as representative of unbelieving Israel (see Jeremiah 12:7; 22:5). The gist of this image, as in Old Testament, is that the people of Israel are in deadly peril. In their rejection of Jesus as their Messiah they are spiritually desolate, as was stated in Ezekiel 8:6: “Son of man, do you see what they are doing-- the utterly detestable things the house of Israel is doing here, things that will drive Me far from My sanctuary? But you will see things that are even more detestable.”

 **“Blessed is he who comes in the name of the Lord”** is a quotation of Psalm 118:26. In its original context this referred to the person who came to be to be blessed in the Jerusalem temple, and the Jews later understood Psalm 118 as Messianic. This quote is also recorded in Luke 19:38 in reference to Jesus’ triumphal entry into Jerusalem. Undoubtedly, this will be ultimately fulfilled (**“see me again”**) at Christ’s second coming.

**Personal Application**

Did God simply reject the Jewish leaders for their rejection of His Son, Jesus the Messiah? No, the power of the gospel is so great that God can break through even the hardest of hearts. For example, Acts 6:7 reports: “The word of God kept on spreading; and the number of the disciples continued to increase greatly in Jerusalem, and a great many of the *priests* were becoming obedient to the faith.” Acts 15:5 records that *Pharisees* had put their faith in Jesus as their Messiah. Undoubtedly, even some of the very same people who were shouting for His crucifixion (Luke 23:21) were radically converted by the compassion of the incomparable Christ.

By way of summary, here are some tips on how Jesus Handled Hostility:

1 – He faced those who had hostility toward Him. No Flight but Fight … in a good way. (But sometimes it is best for us to ignore our adversaries and move on. But Jesus is God – He knows and can handle all!)

2 – Jesus reacted with a sense of humor (mild sarcasm). He was not intimidated and driven to fear/anxiety.

3 – Jesus grieved for His opponents and longed to pour out His compassion.

4 – Jesus was all the more driven to the cross.

5 – Jesus was committed to God’s will. God has a purpose and a plan through it all!

May His mercy and tender care melt our hearts anew, as we reach out an empty hand of faith to our compassionate God – and with the other hand reach out to someone with the good news of our living and loving Savior.

Committed to the Care of the Compassionate Christ,

Pastor Steve Waterman