

Sermon for February 24, 2013 – Lent 2

Luke 13:31-35

Theme: **Nothing could stop Jesus from saving us!**

- 1) *Not the threats and schemes of the world.*
- 2) *Nor even the rejection of those he loves.*

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.'* "

Have you ever noticed that sometimes the very people you are trying to help, resist you the most? Think of the child you are trying to help get dressed - who is screaming and fighting because she wants to do it herself - only to get more frustrated that she can't do it herself! Think of the elderly person who needs help, but who fights tooth and nail against moving into an assisted living facility.

It's human nature to resist help. And if we are the ones offering the help, it is also human nature to give up trying to help someone. Think of the parent walking away from the screaming, half-dressed child in frustration. Think of the son - verbally berated by his elderly parent - who finally gives up trying to help.

We all would like to think that we would neither be so proud as to refuse help, nor so weak as to give up offering help to the people we love . . . but in the end we do both. Why? Because we are sinful.

But thankfully our Savior is not like us. As our sermon text illustrates, Jesus did not give up helping us - even though we have done much in attempting to frustrate his help. Let us rejoice in the fact that **nothing could stop Jesus from saving us!** 1) *Not the threats and schemes of the world.* 2) *Nor even the rejection of those he loves.*

Part One: Not the threats and schemes of the world.

Our sermon text finds Jesus in a region called Perea (a region controlled by King Herod). Jesus was slowly making his way to Jerusalem, the city where He would suffer and die for our sins. But the time was not quite ready. He still had much work to do: teaching and preaching about the Kingdom of God and the forgiveness of sins.

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."*

What? Pharisees warning Jesus? Weren't they trying to kill him? We don't know why these Pharisees warned Jesus. Were these Pharisees good - like Nicodemus? Were they trying to scare him out of Perea? It is not inconceivable that Herod was afraid of Jesus. Scripture tells us that there was a rumor going around that Jesus was in fact John the Baptist raised from the dead, but when this rumor reached Herod, we are told that he simply wanted to "see" Jesus. (Luke 9:7-9).

But regardless of how serious the threat was, Jesus would not be intimidated. *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.'*

Jesus would not stop. He would continue his ministry of teaching and healing, of calling people to repentance and faith, of casting out demons and healing the sick. He would continue until He reached his goal: our salvation.

Jesus alludes to his resurrection in his answer. Using a figure of speech, He proclaims that He will not be intimidated by the government nor anyone else. He will reach his goal of winning salvation for the world - even though the world is against him, as he continues: ³³ *In any case, I must keep going today and tomorrow and the next day--for surely no prophet can die outside Jerusalem!*

Nothing could stop Jesus from saving us - not even the world that raged against him. And thank God this is true! Why? Because we too were once counted among those who raged against God. The Scriptures say: *"The sinful mind is hostile to God. It does not submit to God's law, nor can it do so." (Romans 8:7)* *"Like the rest, we were by nature objects of wrath. But because of his great love for us, God, who is rich in mercy, made us alive with Christ even when we were dead in transgressions—it is by grace you have been saved." (Ephesians 2:3-5)* Jesus did not let anything stop him from accomplishing our salvation, and it is because of this that we believe in Him and have eternal life.

And yet it must be noted that as the world raged against Christ, so it continues to rage against his followers. Throughout the centuries governments have killed followers of Christ. Even today, Christians are being put in to prison and tortured for their faith. Persecution is on the rise.

Even in our own country we feel hostility on account of the Gospel. The media attacks us for being exclusive because we say that a person is only saved through faith in Jesus. The world attacks us as being hateful, because we believe that homosexuality is a sin. They assume that we preach a message of hate, when we preach a message far different than that. We are honest about sin because we want people to turn to Christ for forgiveness and receive eternal life. We preach the truth - not out of hate - but out of love for every soul on this earth.

And yet, the world rages against us and our Gospel of divine love by accusing Christians of all sorts of things. And sometimes we just feel like giving up. We feel like shutting up. We want to flee the "Herod's" that threaten us.

But, brothers and sisters in Christ, don't give up. Don't stop loving the people of this world. Nothing could stop Jesus from loving the world. Nothing could stop Him from saving us. Pray for help - for it is His salvation that we proclaim. Ask Jesus to grant you a heart like His and a steadfast spirit to sustain you. And He will grant your request. He will help you be steadfast in your loving proclamation of the Gospel.

Part Two: Nor even the rejection of those he loves.

After Jesus showed his resolve of dying for our salvation, he goes on to express his heart: 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!"*

Isn't it ironic that the capital city of God's people on earth was also the very city that killed God's prophets? Isaiah was killed in Jerusalem, as was Zechariah son of Jehoiada. The people of Jerusalem tried to kill Jeremiah also.

Time and time again God sent prophets to his people to warn them. He did it in love. Time and time again the people killed the prophets and rejected God's call. Finally, God sent his son Son - his only Son. How Jesus loved his people. How He want to gather them together - to comfort and protect them from all their enemies - but they were not willing.

So what would the result be of their unwillingness? Would Jesus give up on them? No. Even though they wouldn't believe in him, even though they would end up rejecting him and the salvation He would win for them, Jesus still carried it out. In love he still suffered and died for every one of their sins - even though he knew that this act would not benefit them because of their unbelief. He remained faithful to his promise and love.

But what would happen to the Jews because of their unbelief? Jesus tells them: *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.'* "

In other words, they would lose their God. The LORD would leave the temple in Jerusalem and dwell in a different temple: the temple of the Holy Christian Church. The Jewish religion would be a hollow shell. There would be nothing left. The temple would be destroyed along with the city itself. They would not see Christ again, until he comes in judgment day - hailed as our Savior King, as he was when he entered Jerusalem on Palm Sunday.

What a tragic and horrible indictment Christ levels against his own people! And yet, he is saying it in love. He wants the people of Jerusalem to wake up! Their religion was nothing but a show. The heart and core of it was missing - namely, repentance and faith in God's chosen Messiah!

But, brothers and sisters in Christ - let us not look at the Jews of Jesus' day and shake our heads at them in condescension. There, but the grace of God, go we. Where does one find the greatest threat to the Christian faith? It is in the visible Christian Church itself. False doctrine permeates Christianity. On the one hand you have the so called "liberal Christians" who - like the Sadducees of Jesus' day - question the authority of the Scriptures. They are happy to get rid of anything that sounds supernatural. They twist and chop God's Word into a mere social Gospel - one which has a live and let live mentality, one that condones sinful behavior as being acceptable.

On the flip side you have the "work-righteous" who, like the Pharisees, turn the Bible into a rule book - a way that you can earn heaven. These people seem like the postcard of Christian piety, when - in fact - they are like the Pharisees, who burden people with a weight of law that no one can bear. Their self-righteous preaching tear people away from the peace of Christ's full forgiveness. All of Jesus' warning against the Pharisees apply to this group as well.

And then there is yet another group: the complacent - people who just don't care. They are like the majority in Jerusalem during Jesus day. As long as they "belong" to a church - everything will be ok; just don't ask them to read their Bible or stuff like that. Such people don't really care about Christ. All they care about is escaping hell - not so much being with Jesus forever.

For all such people Jesus died. He did not let the complacency of His Old Testament people - as well as his New Testament people - stop him from loving us; from paying for every single sin we have ever committed or ever will.

But don't let this salvation slip away. Don't be like the majority in Jerusalem who were complacent - who didn't care enough about Christ to find out who he truly is or about the salvation he accomplished. That city saw its temple destroyed. It saw its God move away from them.

Could the same thing happen to us? Most certainly. Therefore pray to Christ and ask him to forgive you of your sins - especially the sin of neglecting his Word. Ask Him to create in you a new heart and give you a spirit of joy in his salvation. God loves you. He stopped at nothing to win your salvation. He will hear your prayer and grant your request through the tools he placed before you: His Gospel in Word and Sacrament. Then, come to worship regularly and stay for Bible class. Read your Bible at home and see the great love Christ has for you - a love that lets neither world nor rejection stop him from saving you. Amen.