

Sermon for February 21, 2016 – Lent 2

Luke 13:31-35(NIV84)

**Theme: Jesus cries over his people.**

- 1) *He cries because they reject him.*
- 2) *He cries because he loves them.*

<sup>31</sup> *At that time some Pharisees came to Jesus and said to him, "Leave this place and go somewhere else. Herod wants to kill you."* <sup>32</sup> *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.'* <sup>33</sup> *In any case, I must keep going today and tomorrow and the next day-- for surely no prophet can die outside Jerusalem!* <sup>34</sup> *"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!"* <sup>35</sup> *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.'"*

Back in my former parish in Milwaukee, I had the privilege of serving Hope Carter - a fine Christian lady who faithfully came to worship and Bible Class.

One of Hope's sons served in the Army during the Vietnam war. He came back an emotional mess – suffering from severe Post-Traumatic Stress Disorder. He drank heavily and got involved with drugs. Hope truly loved her son and tried everything to get him into rehab. She let him live with her - doing all his cooking and cleaning. But when he continued bringing drugs into her house, she practiced tough love in the hope of getting him to change. She threw him out of the house – letting him live homeless on the streets of inner-city Milwaukee. When he gave signs that he was willing to change, she would invite him back home. But when he kept on using those drugs and refused rehab, she kicked him out again in love; praying that he would see the mess he was making out of his life and go to rehab to get the help he needed.

I never met this particular son, but Hope often talked to me about him, especially after she was diagnosed with cancer. In the weeks before she died, her love turned into continual weeping. If tears could have saved a person, her son would have definitely been saved. She wanted to see him. She wanted to warn him. She wanted him to be safe. Her daughter got ahold of him, but he refused to come and visit. Why? I don't know. Maybe he was ashamed of himself and his life. He did agree to talk to Hope on the phone one last time before she died, but that was it.

Hope's other children wondered why their mother loved this son so much. They had some choice names for him – especially when he didn't even bother to come to Hope's funeral! Why did their mom cry so much for their no good brother when all he did was disappoint and reject her?

If you're a parent, I think you know the answer to that question. Hope was his Mom – no sin or rejection would ever keep her from loving him unconditionally.

Brothers and sisters in Christ: if you can understand the love Hope had for her wayward son, then you are well on the way to understanding our sermon text and the emotion Jesus expresses in it. Let us consider these things under the theme: **Jesus cries over his people.** 1) *He cries because they reject him.* 2) *He cries because he loves them.*

Part One: He cries because they reject him.

Our sermon text took place while Jesus was preaching in Perea – a region ruled by King Herod. Someone asked Jesus the question: *"Lord, are only a few people going to be saved?"* (Luke 13:23, NIV84) Jesus' reply indicated that, even though heaven is open to all, many people will not get in. Why is that? It's not because God doesn't truly desire their salvation. Rather, it's because many refuse to make every effort go through the narrow door of "Jesus" - that is to say, they refuse to study and believe the Gospel.

<sup>31</sup> *At that time some Pharisees came to Jesus and said to him, "Leave this place and go somewhere else. Herod wants to kill you." Why were these Pharisees trying to help Jesus? Were they "good" Pharisees, like Nicodemus, who secretly followed him and were genuinely concerned about his well-being? Or were they your run of the mill "bad" Pharisees who tried to use "fear" to get Jesus out of their town? We don't know the answer to that question. All we have is Jesus answer: "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.'*

Yes, nothing was going to keep Jesus from accomplishing his goal. And what goal was that? Our salvation, which he would win by means of his perfect life, innocent death and glorious resurrection. This is what Jesus alludes to when he says: *I must keep going today and tomorrow and the next day-- for surely no prophet can die outside Jerusalem!*

Jerusalem was the LORD's chosen city in which his temple stood. It's very name means "foundation of peace." How Jesus loved this city - wishing that its inhabitants would turn to him in faith – willing to fear, love and trust in him as their Savior.

This is why Jesus lamented over Jerusalem like Hope Carter cried for her lost son: *"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!"*

History is filled with examples of how the inhabitants of Jerusalem decided that following the LORD was not as much fun as following the gods of other nations. Whenever this would happen, the LORD would send prophets to warn them of their sin. But would they listen? No, they tried to kill the prophets instead. Why? Because they didn't want to be told that they were wrong. They wanted to worship God on their own terms, with their own rules and definitions as to who he is and what he desires.

This is why Jesus laments over Jerusalem. He, the Son of God, had come to save his people from their sins. But he was not the type of Messiah they wanted; so they rejected him.

And what would be the result of this continued rejection? Jesus says: <sup>5</sup> *Look, your house is left to you desolate.*

By disregarding Jesus, the inhabitants of Jerusalem rejected their true protection and peace. Instead of being objects of God's great love and mercy, they became objects of God's wrath and punishment. The whole city and its temple would be destroyed - an event that took place in 69 A.D. Jesus lamented over Jerusalem because he foresaw this destruction.

"But," some of you might be thinking, "what does this have to do with us? We aren't the Jews of Jerusalem. We are Christians who believe in Christ."

This may be true, but watch out lest you fall. Understand that the same sinful desires that tempted the inhabitants of Jerusalem away from their LORD also tempt us: things like money, sex, leisure, and human pride. Our sinful natures want what the world has and all too often we find ourselves pursuing it. We try to justify our sins by convincing ourselves that they aren't really that big of a deal. Whole church bodies attempt to redefine what sin is - accepting beliefs and practices that clearly go against Scripture. And when they do this, they become exactly like the inhabitants of earthly Jerusalem: refusing to accept Jesus on his own terms - wanting to be more like the world around them instead.

And when this happens, Jesus laments. He laments over his lost children: that they do not listen to him and his accept call to repentance. He laments that his grace is being twisted into a license to do every sin imaginable under the sun. Yes, Jesus laments, because he knows the destruction that is coming on the last day and sees his lost children running headlong into it.

Seeing Hope crying over her lost son caused her other children to consider their relationship with their mother. Seeing Jesus lament over Jerusalem should cause us to do the same - leading us to see the seriousness of sin and unbelief. His tears should lead us to pray: "Lord, forgive me for the times I have treated you and your grace with contempt - unwilling to acknowledge the seriousness of my sins. Lord, let the thought of your tears over Jerusalem remind me that you truly love all people. You truly want the straying to turn back to you. You truly want the unbelieving to know you, repent and be saved. Keep me from ever reading your Gospel with complacency. Always remind me of your loving salvation so that, if I find myself on a path that leads away from you, I might realize it, repent and turn back to you for forgiveness and life."

## Part Two: Jesus cries because he loves them

Why does Jesus weep over Jerusalem, a city that rejected him time and time again? For the same reason he weeps over us when we stray from him or fall from grace: because he loves us more dearly than any mother could ever love her children. Jesus was going to Jerusalem to win eternal peace for all people. He was going to pay the most precious price possible to save mankind: his life. The Bible says: <sup>9</sup> *This is how God showed his love among us: He sent his one and only Son into the world that we might live through him.* <sup>10</sup> *This is love: not that we loved God, but that he loved us and sent his Son as an atoning sacrifice for our sins.* (1Jo 4:9-10 NIV84)

Every warning Jesus gave, every miracle Jesus performed, every encouraging and gracious word he spoke, was done out of love.

How beautiful it is to see Jesus lament over Jerusalem, because it is his love that moves him to cry. Actually his love moved him to do more than cry, it moved him to die.

Blessed is the person Jesus loves. And whom does he love? You. All of you, every person in this church, every person in this city, every person on this earth.

Jesus' whole life was for you. He came to reconcile you with God: forgiving every one of your sins. How did He do this? By living the perfect life you did not, and by taking your sins upon himself and dying in your place. You were on Jesus' mind as he suffered the agonies of hell on the cross. Love for you is what moved him to die. Love for you is why he rose again. Love for you is why he sent out missionaries, pastors and other Christians armed with the Gospel so that you might hear the good news, repent of your sins, and be brought to faith.

Love is what caused Jesus to cry.

Hope Carter had one lost son, and she wept for him greatly. Jesus has many, many lost sons and daughters. He weeps over them because they don't believe in him and are heading to destruction. He weeps over them in love – desiring that they come back to him before it's too late.

Just as Hope wanted her other children to love their lost brother as much as she did, so Jesus desires the same for us. He wants us to weep for the lost too, doing all we can to reach out to them with the message of his grace. May the LORD instill in all of us such a desire for our lost sisters and brothers – that we become God's voice to them, lovingly call them to come home to Christ before it's too late.. Amen.