

Pastor Matthew Ude
Second Sunday in Lent
March 17th 2019

Luke 13:31-35 31 At that very hour some Pharisees came and said to him, “Get away from here, for Herod wants to kill you.” 32 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. 33 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.’ 34 O Jerusalem, Jerusalem, the city that kills the prophets and stones those who are sent to it! How often would I have gathered your children together as a hen gathers her brood under her wings, and you were not willing! 35 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!’”

Which packer game was the most disappointing for you? There were a lot of them to choose from this last fall. One after another they lost. And we don't like it when we lose, we don't like it when our team loses. We like to win.

I know of a family who is always nice to each other when they play games. “Ohh you landed on boardwalk and I have a hotel there that is ok I won't charge you this turn.” It drives me mad. You can't play a game if you aren't trying to win. Competition is what drives the game forward. The purpose is to try and win. If you play “nicely” you aren't going to get anywhere. You have to try to win, you have to desire to win, or the game doesn't work.

In our text today it is Jesus versus . . .

Jesus versus Herod, who do you think loses? Jesus

Jesus versus the Pharisees, who do you think loses? Jesus

Jesus versus Jerusalem, again who do you think loses? Jesus

Jesus loses every time. Herod wants Jesus dead and Jesus dies. The Pharisees want Jesus gone and Jesus leaves, they see him no more. Jerusalem does not want to be gathered to Christ and they are not.

Again and again, the will of man is set in opposition to the will of God.

For the mind that is set on the flesh is hostile to God, for it does not submit to God's law; indeed, it cannot. - Romans 8:7

Man's will is set in opposition to the will of God. This should not surprise us. What does surprise us is that the will of man wins. At least according to our definition anyway.

How is such a thing possible you might say? Indeed there are many theologians who would say that such a thing is not possible. We call them calvinist or reformed. Calvin taught above all else that God can not be defeated. Aaron rodgers can make a mistake and be defeated. Mike McCarthy can make a mistake and lose. God is all powerful he cannot make a mistake. He can not be defeated. Therefore said Calvin what God wants God gets.

But calvin underestimated God's grace. God's power is omnipotent, all powerful, none can oppose it. That's true. But God's grace is greater than His power. His love is greater.

“Now the law came in to increase the trespass, but where sin increased, grace abounded all the more,” Romans 5:20

God doesn't meet our sin with his power he meets it with his love.

And the Word became flesh and dwelt among us, and we have seen his glory, glory as of the only Son from the Father, full of grace and truth. - John 1;14

It is the love of God that more than anything else shows his glory, not his power.

Which father is more loving? The father that seeks to control his adult son, because he knows what is best for him? Or the father that allows his son to make his own decision even when he knows it is a bad one. Warns him, yes, advises him, yes, but ultimately allows his son both the decision and the consequence of his decision.

God loses for one reason and one reason alone. Because he allows men to oppose him. He allows men to choose other than what is his loving desire.

Therefore I tell you, every sin and blasphemy will be forgiven people, but the blasphemy against the Spirit will not be forgiven. - Matthew 12:31

The blasphemy against the Holy Spirit is the opposition of God's grace. The Holy Spirit and God's Word can be opposed. The result is there is not grace left for us. This ought to be the most terrifying truth in all of scripture. Perhaps this is why Calvin refused to believe or teach this simple truth because it is terrifying. The end result of getting what we want is made clear in our text: “Behold you house is left to you desolate.”

Herod and the Pharisees wanted to get rid of Jesus and Jesus gave them what they wanted. They did not see him again until He came in judgement.

The Jews wanted a jerusalem without a Jesus. And they got it. But a Jerusalem without Jesus is empty and useless. It is like a house without an owner. It quickly falls to pieces.

Scripture is filled with examples of those who opposed God and God let them have their way. The Children of Israel did not want to attack the land of canaan. God allowed them to wander for forty years in the wilderness

The children of Israel wanted a king. God allowed it. It caused them all manner of suffering. Balaam wanted to go with Balak, and finally God allowed it. But everytime the results were disastrous. In his grace God allows men to win.

What then is the answer? Our hearts like Jerusalem and Herod and all the others will oppose God and God will let us have what we desire. Yet God's grace is still even greater than that, His love is great enough to allow us our choice. His love is great enough to find a way to save us even when we insist on our way.

Let us return to our text.

Herod and the pharisees used deception and cunning to try and get rid of Jesus. But Jesus would not leave until he had finished, completed, healing and preaching. Our hearts are at war with God. We will not choose the things of God. And God allows us to choose the way of destruction. What can be done?

Jesus preached the word and healed the hearts of men through His word and sacraments. We can not change our hearts but He provided the power to change our hearts in his word and sacraments. Jerusalem was not willing to be gathered, they insisted on killing Jesus as they did all the prophets before him. Jesus went to his death in Jerusalem as a payment for their sins and ours. On the third day Jesus' work would be brought to completion. He would die and when He arose men's sin would be forgiven.

Man brings to completion the work of sin and death. Jesus finished the work of dying for our sins.

Then desire when it has conceived gives birth to sin, and sin when it is fully grown brings forth death. - James 1:15

We have talked about those who opposed God and won to their destruction. There is another who opposed God and though his opposition won salvation. Jacob who was later called Israel struggled with God and won.

He struggled on the basis not of his desire but of God's word. He fought for the not the things of men but the promises of God.

By the grace of God and through His word and sacraments our hearts can be changed to desire the promises. And what we desire God gives us.

Lord open our hearts to desire the grace of God and pour out with in us through your Holy Spirit.

Amen