

February 28, 2010
Lent 2

"Look at the Unfailing Love on the Face of Jesus"

LUKE 13:31-35

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."

If you look at someone's face you can usually tell what they are thinking or feeling. Take a look at this face (angry face on slide) and I think you know what he is thinking. Take a look at this mother's face as she looks at her baby and you know what she is thinking. (Love on mother's face) Take a look at this face and you can tell he is not having a good day. (Sad face) Now let's look at Jesus in this picture of him as the Good Shepherd. Notice the joy and the love as he holds the lost sheep in his arms.

Think of what it must have been to spend every day with Jesus as his disciples did. Always they saw on the face of Jesus this perfect unfailing love for them, for other people, and even for his enemies.

We get to wake up every morning knowing that Jesus' love for us is always the same! "O give thanks unto the Lord for he is good and his mercy endures forever." His mercy endures forever. His steadfast love, his loyalty and his faithfulness are always the same. That's a blessing in your life that never changes even when you are having the worst day of your life.

He wanted to die for us

We see this love on the face of Jesus in his determination to give his life for us. The Pharisees wanted Jesus out of Jerusalem, but Jesus had to be in Jerusalem because that was where he would give his life as a sacrifice for our sins. It was part of God's plan. Jesus was determined to carry out that plan and save us.

"At that time some Pharisees came to Jesus and said to him, 'Leave this place and go somewhere else. Herod wants to kill you.'" The Pharisees did not like Jesus. In fact they hated him with a passion. Do you think they were concerned about what Herod would do to Jesus? I don't think so. They wanted to scare Jesus away with their words, "Herod wants to kill you."

We have a song bird in our back yard that spends the greater part of its day pecking at

our windows. It sees a reflection in the windows, thinks it is another bird and attacks to drive it away. How do you scare the bird away? Some suggestions are pictures of hawks or snakes in the window to scare the bird away. The Pharisees want to scare Jesus out of Jerusalem.

How you ever noticed how often Jesus interacted with this group of people called the Pharisees? There are almost a hundred references in the New Testament to these people called Pharisees. They did not like Jesus because Jesus was a threat to their faulty and fanatical religious views. The Pharisees were super religious people. They were at the synagogue every Sabbath. They fasted twice a week. They gave a tenth of everything had even down to the herbs and spices in their vegetable gardens. They spoke out against the evils of society. They were patriotic, conservative and moral. They loved to be seen by others as being super religious people.

Jesus taught that all this fanatical religious keeping of rules and laws wasn't enough to take away one single sin. In the earlier verses of this chapter, Jesus said that the way to the kingdom of heaven was not through the broad way of keeping rules and regulations but through the narrow way of believing in him. Jesus is the only way to have sin removed. How did the Pharisees react to this? They were like an angry pit bull protecting its turf. Would you like to take a juicy rib bone with lots of meat on it from a pit bull? The Pharisees attacked Jesus for taking away their wrong view of how a person is saved. Tell a fanatical Muslim that their way of following the Koran will not provide them with one second in Paradise and they will attack you. They will certainly not embrace you and say to you, "Thank you so much for telling me I cannot be saved by my religion." Jesus said, "Know the truth and the truth will set you free." Sharing the truth of what he has done for us will also get you into a heap of trouble with people who are determined to hold on to wide path that they have chosen for themselves.

How does Jesus react to his enemies who want him out of Jerusalem? Look at the love on his face as he explains to them how he must be in Jerusalem to suffer and die for people. "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.'" The word used here for "reaching my goal" is the same word used by Jesus on the cross when he cried out "It is finished." Jesus was determined to do the job and do it right. His goal was to take the sin of the world upon himself, and pay for every last sin, including the bad things that entered into your life this past week. Jesus was determined to carry on his work of driving out demons and healing people. He focused on living the perfect life we could not live and dying the perfect death needed to make full atonement for every sin we have committed. Because Jesus had this determination written all over his face, we know we can trust the job he did for us as the Christ, the Messiah. He told his disciples, "I have come that they might have life and have it to the full."

This past summer my wife and I stopped at an Indian restaurant while we traveling for our vacation. The food was great, reasonable price and everything was very clean. Then we went into the bathrooms and they were also very clean, but the paint job in that bathroom was the worst paint job I have ever seen. I still wonder how anyone could have ever done such a poor job of painting. I bring this up because when it comes to making up for what we do wrong, we do a poor job even with other people we have hurt. With God, it is impossible because he demands perfection. Jesus words to these Pharisees indicate he is

determined to give up his life and do the job perfectly, right down to the last detail needed to take of your sin and mine. That allows us to say with the Apostle Paul, "Therefore being justified by faith we have peace with God through our Lord Jesus Christ."

With love written all over his face, Jesus told these Pharisees that he had to die in Jerusalem just as other prophets had been killed by people in Jerusalem. "In any case, I must keep going today and tomorrow and the next day, for surely no prophet can die outside Jerusalem!" We heard about the prophet Jeremiah in our first reading for this morning. The people of Jerusalem tried to kill him for the words which he spoke to them from the Lord but the Lord protected him. Jesus knew these religious people would ban together to have him arrested, beaten and put to death. That was all part of God's plan to save us. In his great Pentecost sermon Peter told some of these same Pharisees, "This man was handed over to you by God's set purpose and foreknowledge; and you, with the help of wicked men, put him to death by nailing him to the cross." If you looked carefully at the face of Jesus you can see the love and determination to carry out God's set plan.

Jesus did not say, "I think I will keep going today and tomorrow and the next day." No! Jesus, said, "I must." When Jesus says, "I must" you know the job of saving people like us is going to get done right, even down to the very last detail. When I say, "I must get something done" how can I ever be sure it will be done right even if it means a stop at the store to pick up groceries? What was that third item? When Jesus says, "I must" then we know that the source of our salvation is totally reliable and trustworthy.

He wanted to rescue his enemies

What amazes us is the level of love that Jesus has for all people, even those who were his enemies. Jesus said, "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 hen gathers her chickens together and you were not willing." A hen will gather her chicks under her wings if she sees them being threatened by some menacing cat in the barnyard. She emits a clucking sound. The little chicks come running as fast as they can, and hide under her wings. She hunkers down tight to the ground, ready to defend her chicks with her own life. Let the cat come near and she will peck its eyes out if necessary. There was once a prairie fire that destroyed a farmer's crop of wheat. As he went out into the field he notice a prairie hen, dead in the burnt over field. He kicked her scorched body, and out from under her body came little chicks that had found safety under the mother's wings. Jesus wanted the people in Jerusalem to come to him and find protection in the suffering he would undergo for their sin. They did not want these blessings. They refused to acknowledge the depth of their sin and their need for Jesus They did not want him to provide them with the pardon and peace they could never find in themselves.

Pity the poor little chick that fails to heed the mother hens clucking sound and find refuge under her wings. The cat is ready to pounce on the little chick and eat if for lunch. Satan is no barnyard cat. He is a roaring lion seeking whom he may devour. Jesus does not want you going it alone. There are no lone rangers and solo Christians in the kingdom of God. We are just a brood of helpless hatchlings banding together under the unfailing mercy, love and protection of our Lord Jesus Christ. He calls us to come to him and find peace and refuge. He pleads with us not to ignore his call as the people of Jerusalem once did. How sad are the words, "And you would not." We recall the words the choir sang a few

minutes ago, "Nobody wanted him. No body came..." Think of the times you were weak. In time of temptation when things were critical you resisted Jesus call to help you. Think of people you know who are resisting his call. And so we pray, "Lord, have mercy on us." That word "mercy" is the Hebrew word "chesed" and it means God's unfailing love. Look at the love on the face of Jesus as he calls out even to his enemies to find refuge under his wings.

The day was coming when Jesus would return to Jerusalem and the people would welcome him momentarily. He said, "Look, your house is left desolate 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.'" Don't leave your house desolate and empty. Welcome Jesus into your home again this week. "Let the word of Christ dwell in you richly as you teach and admonish each other with all wisdom, and as you sing psalms, hymns and spiritual songs with gratitude in your hearts toward God." As you see Jesus unfailing love for you on the pages of the Bible, you will reflect this life with smiles of joy on your faces. May our faces reflect our joy of being loved by Jesus. Amen.