

Lent 2
February 21, 2016

“Look at the 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.’”

Our greatest need in life is to be loved. You can have all the riches in the world but if you do not have people around you who care about you and love you, your life will be empty, without meaning and purpose. As important as human love is, it is even more important to know how much God loves you and cares about you.

This morning we want to take a closer look at the face of Jesus as he prepares to go up to Jerusalem and give us his life for us at the cross. We can do this by taking a closer look at what Jesus says to the Pharisees who pretended to help him. If you look closely at the face of Jesus you will see how determined he is to follow through with dying for the sin of the world. You will also notice on his face a deep love for people who reject him and want nothing to do with him.

Love that is determined to go to the cross

If I wish I could have been there to see the face of Jesus every time he talked about going up to Jerusalem and giving his life for us. Written all over his face a firm resolve and determination to get the job done of saving us and to do it right. In the Old Testament prophet Isaiah the Messiah speaks and says, “Because the Sovereign Lord helps me, I will not be disgraced. Therefore I have set my face like flint.” Flint is a super hard stone. See the love in that face of Jesus that sets his face like flint to go forward to do whatever is necessary to rescue people who are lost like you and me.

It says, “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, especially as he came closer and closer to Jerusalem to teach in the temple courts. Do you think they are worried about what Herod would do to Jesus? Is that why they were warning him? I don’t think so. They want to scare Jesus into staying away from Jerusalem. Whether Herod was actually planning to kill him as he did with John the Baptist or whether they are making this up, we know the Pharisees were always coming up with different ways to get rid of Jesus and counter his teaching.

Why did the Pharisees hate Jesus so much? Because Jesus exposed them for what they truly were hypocrites or pretenders. At one time Jesus called them whitewashed tombs because they looked white on the outside but were like a rotten corpse on the inside. On the family dairy we did not bother to clean the stone and brick walls in the barn, we simply covered them with a new coat of whitewash sometimes twice a year.

It is really not good to be a pretender is it. You can pretend that you know more than you really do, but eventually people will find you out especially if they know more than you. You can pretend to be a nice person on the outside and rotten on the inside, but eventually your real person will come through. You can play these pretend games with God and even look good on Sunday when you come to church, but then have shameful things that you tolerate during the week. Jeremiah 17:9 says, "The heart is deceitful above all things, and beyond cure, who can understand it?"

I talked this week with a pastor who was seeking help in counseling one of his members who confessed to having a major drug problem that he was covering up from his wife, the members of his congregation and his pastor. Some pretenders appreciate having someone tell them truth so they can confess their sin and receive forgiveness and help. Others hate the person who tells them the truth because they don't want their sin exposed. The Pharisees hated Jesus for exposing them for such things as stealing a home from a widow and then making up for their sin with long prayers.

Jesus saw through these Pharisees. Does Jesus walk away and ignore them? No in love he tells them about his determination to go up to Jerusalem and give his life for us. They will not scare him off with threats about Herod killing him. Jesus replied to them: "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. In any case I must keep going today and tomorrow and the next day- for surely no prophet can die outside of Jerusalem!" For Jesus Herod is just a little fox, no threat at all to what he plans to do. If I ran into a fox while hiking I would not be afraid. A grizzly bear or wolf or mountain lion, that would be different.

Nothing will stop Jesus from going forward with his work. He tells them he will keep healing people and throwing out demons, today and tomorrow and the next day. Ultimately he plans to be in Jerusalem where die as prophets in the past have also gave their lives. It is the Pharisees and religious leaders who will lead the charge to get rid of Jesus not King Herod or the Roman government. If you saw a large vicious dog on the front yard chewing on a bone, would you risk going up to the dog and taking away its bone? The Pharisees wanted to tear into Jesus because he took away from them their belief they could save themselves by what they did.

Notice Jesus did not say, "I plan to keep going today and tomorrow and the next day." He said, "I must." What do you see on the face of Jesus as he says this words, "I must?" You see determination. You see love, love for a world of sinners who desperately need him to do something we cannot do ourselves. When I say I must get something done, how can I ever be sure I can follow through with what I want to do? I have no power to even remove one single thing I have done wrong this past week. Even my best efforts to improve myself fall short. My only hope is Jesus' love and determination to get the job done for me. Jesus would not quit or not deviated from his path of saving us until he could cry out from the cross, "It is finished." That's the greatest love in the world. Dear

Christian you have come to know this love and it fills your life.

Love that is determined to reach the lost

And now we are even more impressed with Jesus love for these Pharisees for the people in Jerusalem and for a world full of people who don't want anything to do with him. "O Jerusalem, Jerusalem, you who kill the prophets and stone those who sent to you, how often I longed to gather your children together, as a hen gathers her chicks under her wings, but you were not willing." Let's remember that these memorable words of Jesus were spoken to these Pharisees who had come to scare him and make him not want to come up to Jerusalem and fill the city with his teaching.

What does that tell us about the love Jesus has for people? He wants even his worst enemies to come to him. He wants to gather them together and make them children of his heavenly Father so they can be spared from the judgment to come. He wants them to gather them as a hen gathers her little chicks under her wings. See the hen in the barnyard. The little chicks are eating the insects and grain she has exposed for them by scratching the ground. The mother hen has been keeping her eye on the tomcat that has been prowling around. She knows he is after her chicks. He starts to move closer and she makes a clucking sound the chicks know as their warning to seek cover under her wings. Let the tomcat get near and she will peck out his eyes if necessary to protect her young.

What happens to the little chick that ignores the clucking sound of the mother hen? While the others are safe under the wings of their mother, the rebellious chick becomes an easy meal for the tomcat. So it was with so many people in Jerusalem. Jesus called to the people, "Come to me and I will give you rest" and they ignored his call and wanted to get rid of him. Even when he was dying on the cross, they ridiculed him. What did Jesus do? He prayed, "Father, forgive them for they do not know what they are doing." How true are the words of the hymn: "What punishment so strange is suffered yonder. The Shepherd dies for sheep that love to wander. The master pays the debt the servants owe him, who would not know him."

It is so hard to see people resist the Lord and not want anything do with him. It is also hard to see this resistance when it pops up in our lives. Jesus said of the people in Jerusalem who resisted him, "But you were not willing." Oh, how we struggle when we see some of this resistance in our own lives. We pray, "Lead us not into temptation" but then we expose ourselves to temptation. We want to follow God's word when it says in Philippians, "Whatever is true, whatever is noble, whatever is right, whatever is pure, whatever is lovely, whatever is admirable- if anything is excellent or praiseworthy think about such things." We resist and open ourselves up to impure thoughts, needless worrying, uncharitable and unkind thoughts towards others. Not an hour goes by when we don't desperately need to run to Jesus and to his call for help.

There is only one place where we are safe from the judgment to come and that is in Jesus who wants even rebellious chicks like you and me to find safety. Psalm 57 says, "Have mercy on me, for in you my soul takes refuge. I will take refuge in the shadow of your wings until the disaster has passed." In Psalm 61 David says, "I long to dwell in your tent forever and take refuge in the shelter of your wings."

Jesus warned these people about a terrible destruction that was coming to the city of Jerusalem with the words, "Look your house is left to you desolate. I tell you, you will not see me again until you say, "Blessed is he who is coming in the name of the Lord." For some there would be a rejection and desolation. For others there would be the joy of welcoming Jesus as they did in Psalm 118 with the words, "Blessed is he who comes in the name of the Lord."

My fellow believers in Christ, today you have seen the love on your Savior's face as he shows his determination to finish his work of saving us. You have also seen how much he loves you in his determination to keep you close to him as a mother hen gathers her chicks under her wings. He stretches out his wings to cover you because he stretched out his arms for you and let them be nailed to a cross. Our greatest need in life is to be loved. There is no greater love than the love Jesus has for you. This morning you have seen this love on his face in the words he has spoken to you. Amen.