

Our Savior Won't Let Anything Stop Him

Luke 13:31-35

March 16, 2025 (Lent 2-C)

St. Paul's Lutheran, North Freedom

At that time some Pharisees came to Jesus and said to him, "Leave this place and go somewhere else. Herod wants to kill you."

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.' In any case, I must keep going today and tomorrow and the next day—for surely no prophet can die outside Jerusalem!"

"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! 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.'" (Luke 13:31-35 NIV84)

Dear disciples of Jesus Christ, our Lord and Savior from sin:

It was a long trip to Grandma and Grandpa's. The kids were getting restless in the back seat. They spotted a sign for a hotel and asked, "Mom, Dad, can't we stay at that hotel overnight? We're getting tired. Besides, it has a nice pool and a continental breakfast!"

But Dad was determined to keep on going. He told the kids, "We told Grandma and Grandpa we'd make it there tonight. We're not stopping now." And so they drove past the hotel.

In today's text, we see how some people were trying to stop Jesus from doing his work, and even threatening to kill him. But Jesus was resolved to keep going, until he would reach his destination in Jerusalem. So we find that then, and today, that **Our Savior Won't Let Anything Stop Him**. Enemies won't stop his drive to save us; events won't stop his love for us.

At this time Jesus was in the region of Perea, on the east side of the Jordan River. It was a region ruled by King Herod. Some Pharisees, pretending as though they were doing Jesus a favor, advised Jesus to leave Perea and "go somewhere else. Herod wants to kill you."

Did Herod really want to kill Jesus? Maybe. His party, the Herodians, had previously ganged up on Jesus. However, months later when Jesus was on trial in Jerusalem and Herod was in town, we're told that Herod was glad to see Jesus and wanted him to perform some miracles. At any rate, we do know that the Pharisees didn't have Jesus' best interest in mind. They wanted Jesus to leave and get out of their sight; they were the ones who were already plotting to find a way to kill Jesus because they didn't believe he was the Messiah, though crowds were claiming it.

But Jesus wouldn't let them stop him. He called Herod a "fox," a sly, crafty individual. He informed both Herod and the Pharisees that he still had work to do: "I will drive out demons and heal people today and tomorrow." His mission was not yet complete. But "on the third day I will reach my goal." Soon the Savior would get to his goal, the time would be right to be put to death. But it wouldn't be in Herod's territory. "I must keep going today and tomorrow and the next day—for surely no prophet can die outside Jerusalem!" In Jerusalem the enemies would catch up to Jesus; but even there, Jesus would only die on his own terms.

Now, let's consider how enemies still try to stop Jesus and his message today. We think of governments that try to shut the door on Christian missionaries and nations where the Bible is

banned, societies and peoples of other religions who may persecute Christians. But let's remind ourselves that our own sinful nature is an enemy against God. St. Paul wrote, "The sinful mind is hostile to God. It does not submit to God's law, nor can it do so" (Ro. 8:7). We're just as guilty as the Pharisees if by our words and actions we're telling our Savior, "Jesus, leave this place. Go somewhere else." Maybe it's when we're at the bar and drinking a little too much, or it's Sunday morning and we just don't feel like going to church, or when the pastor or a church member comes to your home to warn you of a certain sin—do we say to them, "Leave this place, go somewhere else. This is my home, I'm going to do what I want"?

Enemies outside church, enemies inside, the enemy inside of us—they want to stop Jesus. But our Savior won't let those enemies stop his drive to get to his destination. He did make it to Jerusalem. And just when it seemed as though his enemies did stop him, getting condemned, crucified and put to death, Jesus showed that he wasn't stopped. "On the third day I will reach my goal." On the third day, after Jesus was put to death, he rose from the dead! Jesus achieved his goal of paying for our sins on the cross. The Father accepted that payment and raised him from the dead. Thank the Lord that our Savior didn't let anything stop his drive to save us from every sin!

That same Savior is determined to come to us now and rescue us all. He does this because he loves us. And in Jesus' next words, we find that events won't stop his love for us.

"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!" During the time of the kings in Jerusalem, ungodly kings tried to kill faithful prophets like Jeremiah, as we saw in today's first reading, and many times they succeeded. Jesus knew full well that in Jerusalem, the enemies would put him to death. But that didn't stop Jesus' love for them. You can hear in his words just how sorrowful he was over Jerusalem, how much he longed to gather them like a mother hen, trying to gather her chicks under her wings to protect them from a storm or a predator.

"But you were not willing. Look, your house is left to you desolate." Some wonder why the Lord didn't just use his almighty power to force the people of Jerusalem, or to force enemies today, to believe. That's not how God operates his love. He doesn't force his love and salvation on us; the gospel message is to produce willing hearts that welcome the Savior. But the sad fact is that his love will get spurned by some. May it never be that we spurn that love!

Yet even when he was rejected, Jesus loved the Pharisees and the people of Jerusalem, promising: "You will not see me again until you say, 'Blessed is he who comes in the name of the Lord.'" When Jesus entered Jerusalem on Palm Sunday, the crowd said that statement from Psalm 118, a psalm speaking about the Messiah. It is sung by us on communion Sunday. For in his love he comes to us, our Savior, his body and blood there, rescuing us from our own sinful self.

Be assured, dear friends, that events today won't stop his love for you. Whether we find success or failure in this life, whether our nation prospers or goes into recession, whether or not our team wins a ball game, and whatever else happens, your Savior still loves you. Even in those moments when we hurt, when we've stumbled into sin, your Savior extended his arms out to die for you and extends his hands to pull you up. No, our Savior won't let anything stop him from loving you, from saving us all, and from giving us spiritual and eternal life! Amen.