

Sermon March 16, 2025
Looking prayer

Luke 13:31-35

At that very hour some Pharisees came and said to him, 'Get away from here, for Herod wants to kill you.' He said to them, 'Go and tell that fox for me, "Listen, I am casting out demons and performing cures today and tomorrow, and on the third day I finish my work. Yet today, tomorrow, and the next day I must be on my way, because it is impossible for a prophet to be killed away from Jerusalem."

Jerusalem, Jerusalem, the city that kills the prophets and stones those who are sent to it! How often have I desired to gather your children together as a hen gathers her brood under her wings, and you were not willing! See, your house is left to you. And I tell you, you will not see me until the time comes when you say, "Blessed is the one who comes in the name of the Lord." '

Christ Be With Me

Christ with me, Christ before me, Christ behind me,
Christ in me, Christ beneath me, Christ above me,
Christ on my right, Christ on my left,
Christ where I lie, Christ where I sit, Christ where I arise,
Christ in the heart of everyone who thinks of me,
Christ in the mouth of everyone who speaks to me,
Christ in every eye that sees me,
Christ in every ear that hears me.

Saint Patrick

Open Invitations

It had been a long, difficult journey. Sometimes surrounded by desperate crowds... sometimes only a trusted few friends. Hot and dusty and tired, they kept moving forward, waiting for a glimpse of the beloved city – Jerusalem. The place where all the faithful were expected to go as pilgrims at least once in their lifetimes. The place where many believed they would literally encounter the presence of God.

Jesus was full of emotion, and maybe his eyes were full of tears. It had been a long journey of teaching, healing, controversy and opposition. But now, his destination is right before his eyes. He can see the magnificent gates. He can see the fulfillment of God's promises.

Jerusalem. Jerusalem. He was there, at last. The journey was reaching its end. Here he was, beholding the city that is the mirror of God's life, love and Shalom- the city that symbolizes God's people, their hopes and their dreams, their history and their future. I can understand Jesus' profound, deep emotion in seeing that city, and also his grief.

"Jerusalem, Jerusalem, how I have longed for you, how often have I desired to gather your children," he said. Jesus cries out because of his deep love for the children of God and for this Holy City. His deep love for all of God's beloved world.

Jesus is making his journey to Jerusalem for some very specific and powerful reasons. He goes to announce God's love for God's people. He goes to call people to that love and lives rooted in that love. He goes to make the greatest expression of his love, the ultimate sacrifice of that love, to accomplish what he is destined to accomplish. He goes to fulfill God's covenant of redemption.

I wonder if he reflected on God's promises from the past, including the covenant reflected in the stars given to Abram. Promises that span generations – passed on through stories and tradition. Remembered each time the people look up and get a glimpse of the stars that cover the night sky.

I wonder if he had a glimpse of God's new covenant in the shadow of the cross that already stretched across the road before him.

"Be careful. Herod wants to kill you," Jesus is warned. His followers must have felt so helpless, knowing that the political and religious leaders were joining forces to stop their little movement before it even began.

And yet they followed the one who called them in love. They put aside their fears and moved forward towards the city gates, following his sacred footprints.

The shadow of the cross looms in front of us too, my friends, and sometimes we feel helpless. It feels as if the powers that be do nothing to protect us... they may even work to harm us.

We live in times when economic disparities are higher than they have been for 100 years. Tariff wars threaten to bring up costs of day-to-day items and proposed tax breaks only seem to help a handful of privileged people. .

We live in times where people can gather to pray in houses of worship, just like this one, only to be greeted by a rain of bullets. Not once, not twice, but more times than I can count... and across every faith tradition. We live in times where death and fear is found in a place where people seek sanctuary... Safety.

We live in times when there are more people walking the earth than ever before, but rising reports of feelings of isolation, loneliness, depression and anxiety. Too many of our siblings are surrounded by others but feel so alone... maybe you are one of those facing loneliness and isolation.

We live in times when people need to hear the Good News of God's Love more and more.

And today, Jesus sends us out to share that Good News, even in these hard times. When Jesus walked these dusty roads, he didn't talk to the powerful people – the corporate giants and political leaders... the people who make the big decisions.

No, he went to people just like you and me. People who worked hard... and sometimes had little to show for it at the end of the day. People who struggled and cried and prayed and hoped for something better for their children and grandchildren.

People who had no power or authority

And what did Jesus do?

HE GAVE THEM THE POWER AND THE AUTHORITY

He gave them everything they needed... and more. The cover of protection, like the wingspan of a mother hen protecting her beloved chicks. Like the Holy Spirit, covering Jesus as he moved out of Nazareth and began his ministry. And with this protective cover, we can move forward as modern-day disciples and speak words of truth and love in these difficult times.

I believe that we have the ability to bring about enormous change with just a little bit of love and faith. We don't need to be big political powers – in fact that's not what God want for us. God will empower us and authorize us to spread love and hope one person at a time, one place at a time, until we see the kingdom of God break forth right before our eyes and push the shadow of the cross away.

As the old song goes, "They will know we are Christians by our Love." May our footsteps always leave the sacred imprint of love. "Blessed is the one who comes in the name of the Lord."

Amen