

Immanuel (Augsburg) Lutheran Church
Shobonier, Illinois
Lent 2C
March 16, 2025
Luke 13:31-35

Another Temptation

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.'" (Luke 13:31-35 ESV)

In the name of Jesus the only savior of the world.

Last week we heard about the devil's attempt to derail Jesus from His course at the beginning of Jesus' ministry. We heard that Jesus was tempted to express His Sonship by 1) exercising independent authority rather than filial obedience by turning a stone into bread; 2) going for immediate glory rather than future glory by worshiping Satan; and 3) demonstrating a lack of trust in His Father by putting Him to the test by jumping from the temple. We also heard how Jesus repelled those temptations with one little word, by using the "sword of the Spirit," the Word of God, as a weapon against the wiles of Satan.

Today's Gospel finds Jesus being tempted again, though not directly by Satan. It's about three months from the end of His ministry. He's already been through Galilee, Samaria, and Judea and is now in Perea, an area just east of the Jordan. He's doing the same things He had done wherever He had gone.

While He's there, the Pharisees arrive with a death threat from Herod. How odd this is. For everywhere Jesus had been, the Pharisees had been His enemies. Why would they warn Jesus about Herod? Was this a real threat from Herod? Or were the Pharisees simply trying to scare Jesus? We're not told directly.

Jesus responded by remaining focused on His task and His goal. Men had tried to kill Him before, but He had simply walked away. So, Jesus tells the Pharisees that they could tell that sly, old Herod that He was going to continue doing what He was doing and that He would leave when the time was right. He wouldn't be rushed or scared off by anyone, including Herod. It's as though Jesus tells Herod, "Nice try but not good enough." Jesus was going to continue to preach, heal, and drive out demons day by day until His Father deemed the time was right for His Son to die. And Herod couldn't do anything about it. Neither Satan, nor Herod, nor the

Pharisees could, or would, deter Jesus from finishing His task at the time and place appointed by His Father.

And when Jesus remarked that "no prophet can die outside Jerusalem," He was telling them that He was going to Jerusalem and that He would die there. Indeed, throughout Israel's history God's prophetic preachers had been killed in Jerusalem. Matthew tells us that on another occasion Jesus told the Pharisees:

I am sending you prophets and wise men and teachers. Some of them you will kill and crucify; others you will flog in your synagogues and pursue from town to town. And so upon you will come all the righteous blood that has been shed on earth, from the blood of righteous Abel to the blood of Zechariah son of Berekiah, whom you murdered between the temple and the altar. I tell you the truth, all this will come upon this generation. (Matthew 23:34-36)

This was a way of saying that they had killed the prophets from A to Z. The Jews truly had mistreated and killed many prophets. They rejected the prophets' message. A good example is found in today's Old Testament lesson where we read that after Jeremiah called the people to repentance and predicted the calamity that would befall them if they didn't repent, they grabbed him and were ready to kill him. They simply didn't want to hear what God had to say. So as the Jews mistreated the prophets of old, so they mistreated Jesus as well. They should have received and accepted Jesus, but they didn't.

And how does Jesus handle such rejection? He laments over the fact that as often as He had tried to gather the people together and to protect them, they rebelled and refused to be gathered together. It's not that Jesus stopped trying, but that they rejected Jesus. In fact, this entire chapter of Luke shows Jesus calling the people to repentance and warning them of the consequences if they don't repent. He makes it quite clear that those who do not repent will perish. Indeed, Jesus "desires all men to be saved and to come to the knowledge of the truth" (1 Timothy 2:4). He took no delight "in the death of the wicked but that the wicked turn from his way and live" (Ezekiel 18:32; 33:11). Yet He was rejected again and again.

There's an old story told about a hen house that burst into flames after being struck by lightning. "The volunteer fire department could not save the hen house. As the farmer poked through the ashes he found the charred carcass of a hen. But underneath the blackened carcass were six chicks who had survived the fire. The mother hen had 'gathered her chicks under her wings.' She had died so they might live." This illustrates what Jesus does for us. He gathers us together through the working of the Holy Spirit to keep us safe under His outstretched arms on the cross. He also died that we might live. But those that refuse to be gathered and run away from Christ will perish.

Now, during Lent it is likely that Jesus' final words in our text cause many of us to think about His entry into Jerusalem on Palm Sunday. But Jesus is addressing His enemies, the Pharisees. He tells them that they would not see Him until the time comes when they say, "Blessed is He who comes in the name of the Lord." On Palm Sunday, the people that lined the street were the pilgrims that had come there for the Passover. The leaders certainly didn't praise Jesus that day! But on the Last Day, when Jesus returns to gather His children together, everyone will recognize Jesus as the one "who comes in the name of the Lord." Some Jews, and maybe even some of their leaders, will be saved only because they believe that Christ came to save them from their sins. But for those who do not believe, Jews and non-Jews alike, it will be too late.

We, too, are often like Jerusalem. We, too, reject God's prophets that He sends to us, as Jeremiah and Jesus were rejected. We often break the Third Commandment when we "despise preaching and His Word" by not gladly attending church, not using the Word and Sacraments, or by using them negligently or carelessly. We do that when we refuse to read and study His Word.

Yet Jesus, through the working of the Holy Spirit, continues to call us and enlighten us with His gifts of Baptism, Absolution, the Lord's Supper, and preaching. And, as God continued to send the prophets to the Jews, He continues to gather us together to keep us in faith so that we may have life with Him. He never gives up. He reminds me of the Energizer bunny. He keeps going and going and going. He also reminds me of Wile E. Coyote. No matter how many times he fails to capture the Roadrunner, he continues to try. His persistence is amazing. And so it is with Jesus. Even though He had been rejected everywhere He had been, He continued to care about His children. He continued to go down the road laid out for Him by His Father. He resisted Satan's temptations and Herod's death threat by once again demonstrating His firm trust in His Father's will and His resolve to finish the course that had been laid out for Him. And, no matter how often He had been rejected, He never failed to love and care for all people. For He was going to die for them and for us. And He didn't want any of them to be lost. And it greatly saddens Him when even one is lost.

You and I have been born under a death threat. Because of our sin we deserve to die. But because of Jesus' death and resurrection, we need not fear it. Although in many ways we stubbornly resist, in even more ways our sorrowing and persistent Savior continues to "call, gather, and enlighten" us by the Holy Spirit through Word and Sacrament. He continues to minister to us by casting out demons, healing the fatal disease of sin, and gathering us to Himself. And His work in us will be complete on our "third day"—the day of our resurrection. God grant that when Christ returns, we will rejoice to say, "Blessed is he who comes in the name of the Lord." Amen.

The peace of God, which passes all understanding, keep your hearts and minds through Christ Jesus.

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