

## **SCRIPTURE READINGS AND SERMON**

**Second Sunday in Lent**

**March 13, 2022**

**Psalm 4:1–8 (ESV):**

1 Answer me when I call, O God of my righteousness!

You have given me relief when I was in distress.

Be gracious to me and hear my prayer!

2 O men, how long shall my honor be turned into shame?

How long will you love vain words and seek after lies? Selah

3 But know that the LORD has set apart the godly for himself;

the LORD hears when I call to him.

4 Be angry, and do not sin;

ponder in your own hearts on your beds, and be silent. Selah

5 Offer right sacrifices,

and put your trust in the LORD.

6 There are many who say, “Who will show us some good?

Lift up the light of your face upon us, O LORD!”

7 You have put more joy in my heart

than they have when their grain and wine abound.

8 In peace I will both lie down and sleep;

for you alone, O LORD, make me dwell in safety.

**1<sup>st</sup> Scripture Reading: Jeremiah 26:8–15 (ESV):**

8 And when Jeremiah had finished speaking all that the LORD had commanded him to speak to all the people, then the priests and the prophets and all the people laid hold of him, saying, “You shall die! 9 Why have you prophesied in the name of the LORD, saying,

‘This house shall be like Shiloh, and this city shall be desolate, without inhabitant?’” And all the people gathered around Jeremiah in the house of the LORD.

10 When the officials of Judah heard these things, they came up from the king’s house to the house of the LORD and took their seat in the entry of the New Gate of the house of the LORD. 11 Then the priests and the prophets said to the officials and to all the people, “This man deserves the sentence of death, because he has prophesied against this city, as you have heard with your own ears.”

12 Then Jeremiah spoke to all the officials and all the people, saying, “The LORD sent me to prophesy against this house and this city all the words you have heard. 13 Now therefore mend your ways and your deeds, and obey the voice of the LORD your God, and the LORD will relent of the disaster that he has pronounced against you. 14 But as for me, behold, I am in your hands. Do with me as seems good and right to you. 15 Only know for certain that if you put me to death, you will bring innocent blood upon yourselves and upon this city and its inhabitants, for in truth the LORD sent me to you to speak all these words in your ears.”

#### **EPISTLE: Philippians 3:17–4:1 (ESV):**

17 Brothers, join in imitating me, and keep your eyes on those who walk according to the example you have in us. 18 For many, of whom I have often told you and now tell you even with tears, walk as enemies of the cross of Christ. 19 Their end is destruction, their god is their belly, and they glory in their shame, with minds set on earthly things. 20 But our citizenship is in heaven, and from it we await a Savior, the Lord Jesus Christ, 21 who will transform our lowly body to be like his glorious body, by the power that enables him even to subject all things to himself.

4 Therefore, my brothers, whom I love and long for, my joy and crown, stand firm thus in the Lord, my beloved.

#### **Gospel: Luke 13:31–35 (ESV):**

##### **Lament over Jerusalem**

**31** 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.’”

**33** Nevertheless, I must go on my way today and tomorrow and the day following, for it cannot be that a prophet should perish away from Jerusalem.’ **34** O Jerusalem, Jerusalem, the city that kills the prophets and stones those who are sent to it! How often would I have gathered your children together as a hen gathers her brood under her wings, and you were not willing! **35** Behold, your house is forsaken. And I tell you, you will not see me until you say, ‘Blessed is he who comes in the name of the Lord!’ ”.

## **Sermon 11 – Second Sunday in Lent**

### **“Blessed is You”**

#### **Luke 13:31-35**

Dear friends,

In our Gospel lesson Jesus has some extremely harsh things to say, He is coming close to being sarcastic and almost nasty, and it is worth asking why and what we can learn from it. Much of this is a mystery, God does not fully explain how some of these concepts work, but we can share what we know and what Jesus' words can teach us. What we know from this reading is this: It is God who desires to bring His people to salvation. It is God who wants to save people. It is people who decide to reject God and go their own way into sin and death and punishment. God will continue His efforts to save people, but only to a point, and God alone is the one who knows when that line is crossed and what it will look like. Jesus uses His own path, His own journey, to illustrate this. He uses Jerusalem as an example of all human beings. God's chosen people are embodying the worst of what humanity has to offer, and that is an excellent illustration of what we are as sinners. Yet this is exactly why Jesus is here and this is exactly what Jesus has changed within you and I.

This chapter of Luke is all about people missing the point. Jesus confronts several different wrong opinions on what is important, and He confronts them all. He talks about worrying about your own soul when it comes to eternal salvation. He talks about how God prioritizes the salvation of His people, even to the exclusion of everything else. He goes on to illustrate how this salvation looks way different than we expect, using a

mustard seed as an illustration. With all these warnings and corrections, I don't think it is an accident that He ends on this note.

**“31 At that very hour some Pharisees came and said to him, “Get away from here, for Herod wants to kill you.”** Quick note. If you know anything at all about King Herod this should not surprise you, in fact the only surprise is that it took this long. King Herod does not tolerate anyone who even remotely threatens his power, this is the same guy that had John the Baptizer (and he liked John the Baptizer) beheaded to keep a promise to a dancing girl. I think that is part of why Jesus responds so strongly to this warning. **“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.’”** My translation is this: Bring it on. That's what Jesus says to Herod. Bring it on. Come at me. I'm going to keep doing what I'm doing, casting out demons and performing cures. You know why? Herod isn't in charge here. Herod cannot kill me. Coming from anyone else that sounds like bravado, chest-thumping macho stuff. Coming from Jesus, who knows exactly when, how, and *why* He will die, you can see why He says this. You don't control my life or my death, Herod. God does. I'm at His disposal, I am God's servant, not yours. You want to try to kill me, go right ahead. It's quite a tart response to say the least, but Jesus is a man on a mission, and He knows who His master is, and it isn't Herod. Jesus' death will not happen for the convenience of anyone, no matter how powerful they are, because Jesus' death is His ultimate act of service and love. Only God the Father decides how and when Jesus will die, and God the Father has already decided that. Jesus will die by being crucified, and no man can alter that destiny. Remember, this whole chapter is about people being presumptuous and or missing the point. Jesus has just received the final example of both. Herod thinks he is in charge of Jesus and thinks that Jesus is a threat to Him. Jesus' words remind us that this is not the point, it doesn't matter, what matters is only what Jesus is here to accomplish, saving from sins.

This feeds into the incredibly strong condemnation that He is going to give next. **“33 Nevertheless, I must go on my way today and tomorrow and the day following, for it cannot be that a prophet should perish away from Jerusalem.”** That is a big ouch. Jesus

is reminding those listening that the most dangerous place for a prophet of God to be was in God's own city. Imagine if I said that about you. The most dangerous place for a pastor to be is Bethel Lutheran church. That would be extremely insulting, and that's what Jesus is saying to them. But He's not saying it out of emotion, He's thinking of the history. The whole Old Testament is a record of Jerusalem, God's holy city, being unkind and violent toward God's own prophets. This completely flips what we expect. We're God's people, God's prophets should be welcome among God's own people. But history shows that to be a lie, it is in Jerusalem that the prophets are condemned and murdered time and time again. It is the Jews that, again and again, for a thousand different reasons, turn against God's voices, because they're turning against God. That's what Jesus talks about next.

**“34 O Jerusalem, Jerusalem, the city that kills the prophets and stones those who are sent to it! How often would I have gathered your children together as a hen gathers her brood under her wings, and you were not willing!”** This teaches us a bunch of things. Again, it is God that brings His people into His kingdom. The Small Catechism outlines it so well: It is God who calls gathers enlightens and sanctifies the whole Christian church on earth and keeps it with Him in the one true faith. This must be God, because if we're honest with ourselves we recognize this in-born tendency toward rebellion all too well. The hen wants to gather us, and we wrestle, fight, and try to generally wiggle out of God's grip. Our sin makes us not willing, big shock. This is innate, and most of the time we don't even realize that we are doing it. Like most inadvertent sins, this is what makes it all the more tragic and hurtful for God.

Again, if God is the one who saves, then God is the one who is ultimately responsible for sending us to hell as well. That is reasonable to us, but that is not what the Scriptures say. The Scriptures say that the reason we go to hell is because we resist God until the end, and this makes it our fault. The reason we go to heaven is because God saves us, and thus God gets the credit. It's complicated and not easy to understand because it doesn't follow logically, but it makes the only kind of sense that the Scriptures tell us. You get a perfect example with Jesus' words here. God's desire is for all His people to be saved but some of them just refuse to accept it, they won't stop fighting. To us, this

means God needs to try harder, to do better work, but that is a lie, just like every logical conclusion we come to on this point is a lie. Logic does not work for salvation. It just doesn't. This is one of those instances where we hang up on our brains and go, well, this is what God says, this must be the way it works.

This just condemnation though. We should hear that condemnation, we should, because its in there, but it isn't only that. Look at Jesus words. He *longs* to gather His children. This is a lovely revelation as to our God's character. God is not resenting His children for their rebellion, He is not there with you out of obligation. He does the hard work of saving you, and keeping you saved, because He wants to. Because it is important to Him. Because you are important to Him. Furthermore, God tells you with these words that He is with you for the long game. No one plays the long game like God plays the long game, it is truly a marvel to see in action and think about, and this is a great reminder that God is after you forever. He wants you with Him in heaven and in the New World that He is building, and He is never going to stop fighting for you. Even if that means fighting you.

The truth about sin is deeply intimidating. It is really quite sad to hear that we're doomed from the start, to know that no matter what we do, no matter how hard we try, we can't change that rebellious heart we have that never stops resisting God. When you feel that way, remember these words. I long to gather you. And our God doesn't sit around wanting something and doing nothing about it. When God wants something, He goes out and gets it. He goes out and gets you, even if it takes a lifetime.

That's what He means at the end. **“And I tell you, you will not see me until you say, ‘Blessed is he who comes in the name of the Lord!’”** This is obviously a not subtle reference to the events of Palm Sunday, the crowd cheering Hosanna as their Savior rides to Jerusalem to be crucified. But it is more than that for you. You weren't there at Palm Sunday, you weren't there to see Him crucified. That's not you. This is for you as you will be in the life of the world to come. You will not see Christ again, not in this world. But in the next, you will be the ones saying, “Blessed is he comes in the name of the Lord!” You will not be saying it sarcastically, or ironically, you won't be misunderstanding what you're saying when you say it. You won't be among a crowd who wants to crucify Jesus, no. You'll

be with all the heavenly host and every Christian that has ever lived, and you will all be cheering and praising your Messiah with one voice. You will be holy and pure and with Him and saying those words with complete and utter sincerity. With all your heart. You will do all this because God chased you down, wouldn't let you go, wouldn't leave you as a sinner. For today, you are blessed, because Jesus came in the name of the Lord. He came to save you.

Amen.