

Title: Faithfulness, no panic
Text: Luke 13.31-35
Theme: Sovereignty with deep affection
Series: Luke
Prop Stmtnt: The unfailing plan of God displays the deep affection of God

In order for a kidnapping to be successful, the parents have to want the kid and be willing to meet the demands to get the kid back. Imagine someone kidnapping a fifteen-year-old and demanding ransom and the parents saying, *“hey listen, he s about to get his driver s license and my insurance is going through the roof, and in a couple of years he wants to go to college and I am going to be so broke it won t be funny and besides all he does is complain about what his mom cooks and the chores he has to do and he won t pick up his clothes and there are some strong odors that come from his room, so, ransom? Give us a few days to get back with you. We ll see if by that time, we miss him.”*

Similarly, in order for a robbery to be successful, the victim has to want to live. The threat of *“your money or your life”* only works if the one being robbed cares more about life than money. If the person doesn’t care about living, and if the thief doesn’t want to actually hurt the person, much less kill them, well then, the thief has just lost all of their leverage.

Our text opens with Jesus being threatened. Seriously? How do you threaten Jesus? What can anyone possibly do to threaten Jesus that would force him to do something against his will? You can’t. You cannot kill Jesus. The only way for Jesus to die is if he chooses to lay down his life. That is how he lived. We may get caught between a rock and hard place. We may hear news that causes us to panic, but not so with Jesus. And yet, what I find so beautifully fascinating about Christ is that his perfect knowledge and sovereign control over the future does diminish his capacity to be fully engaged in the moment.

Read Text:

Luke tends to arrange his gospel somewhat chronologically but also thematically. There are times when he will group events together because he is trying to give us an in-depth view of a particular aspect of Christ. Here (v.31) he says, “At that very hour” so that we, the reader, know that right after Jesus gave this warning about the inevitable closing of the narrow door of salvation, some Pharisees came and warned him that Jesus needed to flee because Herod wanted to kill Christ.

1. **Man’s threats are nullified by God’s promises.** (31-33)

There is an old Sufi legend about Azrael, the death angel, the prophet Solomon and a companion. Solomon and his companion were sitting together one day, when Azrael sat down near them and stared at the companion, who was understandably freaked out. Azrael appeared puzzled, and without a word, got up and left. The companion asked who that was and Solomon told him that it was the angel of death and the fact that he stared at him meant that he was

going to take his life. At that point, the man begged the prophet to use his powers to send him to India, which the prophet did. The next day, Solomon saw Azrael again and asked him about the strange meeting the day before. Azrael said that he was confused because he knew that he was supposed to come for the man the next day (now today) but in India.

If you were told that the king wanted to kill you, you would have good reason to fear. The king has power to act upon his threats, even if they are born from insecurity and there are plenty of people willing to cozy up to the king who will carry out his wishes in order to curry favor. If you know anything about Herod, you know that this is not an idle threat. Now, given the fact that the Pharisees were able to get Pilate to bow to their demand to crucify Jesus, it is possible that the Pharisees bad mouthed Jesus to Herod to the point where he said he wanted to kill Jesus because Jesus was disturbing the peace. In an effort to keep favor with Rome, which he depended to be able to retain his role as king, Herod wanted peace, no matter what. So, I take this as a legitimate threat, even if it were stoked by the Pharisees. It would also be convenient for them to get Jesus to leave their area so they don't have to deal with him. Either way, hearing that the king wants to kill you, would keep most of us awake at night. David heard this. Saul wants to kill you. David ran for his life. Jesus hears this and is not moved, but rather tells the Pharisees to take a message back to Herod, which was also a message for them.

Jesus treats the Pharisees as if they are really bringing a message from Herod so he tells them to take a message back to him. There is a decidedly lack of apology on the part of Christ as well as a decidedly lack of respect. Herod, after all, is NOT in the line of David and is an illegitimate imposter who has connived to grab the reins of power. Jesus is not impressed nor intimidated. "Go tell that fox (think deceiver, destroyer) that I have a mission to carry out (casting out demons, healing people) today, tomorrow and on the third day, I finish my course. Jesus was not only on a mission from God, he was God on a mission. Nothing could stop the mission.

There are people who seem to be unfazed by danger and their bravado steels the courage of those around them, like the soldier who on the eve of battle assures those in his platoon that the bullet with his name on it, hasn't been made yet. Clint Eastwood made a lot of money as Inspector Callahan 50 years ago as he appeared to be the greatest threat to bad guys since he couldn't be intimidated. William Henley wrote his famous poem *Invictus*, in this vein.

It matters not how strait the gate,
How charged with punishments the scroll,
I am the master of my fate:
I am the captain of my soul.

That is not what Jesus is doing. He is not being a defiant stoic, but rather stating the truth. He knows that man, for all his bravado is not to be feared.

Psalms 118:6 says, "*The LORD is on my side; I will not fear. What can man do to me?*"

Hebrews 13.5 states, *“Keep your life free from love of money, and be content with what you have, for he has said, I will never leave you nor forsake you.”* Then he quotes from Psalm 118.6 and says, *“So we can confidently say, The Lord is my helper; I will not fear; what can man do to me?”* Jesus models this confidence. We get anxious about not having enough money, or what people think about us, or wishing that we had a different life and God says, wait a minute. If you have me, you have all you need. Man can make his threats, circumstances can be intimidating, but if the Lord is your helper you don’t need to fear. Even if the king says that he wants to kill you, you can live with confidence that God will keep you alive on this earth every minute he has determined to give you.

Beloved, do not let the threats of this life distract you from your purpose. Jesus had a course to finish. Praise God he did! Jesus was not afraid of Herod and he did not run from the cross. I’m not sure if his statement about the 3rd day is simply literal about keeping his schedule, or is a veiled allusion to finishing his job to die and rise again. Either way, the point is clear. Jesus was finishing the job.

2. God’s Promises guarantee God’s plan (31-33)

Several years ago, Hansa Bergwall helped launch an App that reminds you daily that you are going to die. 5x a day a message will appear on your phone that says, “don’t forget you’re going to die.” The app (if you are interested) is called, WeCroak. It can be a useful reminder for those who fail to plan. But beyond that, it does not provide a great deal of hope. Death tends to be something we try to avoid and for most people fear. Jesus knew that he was going to die, but he knew that he was going to die was a specific fulfillment of God’s plan and therefore, Jesus was simply going to stay the course.

God knows the days of your life, and the mission that he has called you to fulfill. You can live your days with confidence in that. Yes, don’t forget you are going to die, but as Ecclesiastes basically says, “have a blast while you last.” And you can have a blast while you last because you know, like Jesus knew that the promises of God for your life keep you here so you can fulfill your mission.

Verse 33 goes along with 31 and 32 which is why I included it in the first point. The first point focuses on what you don’t have to fear, while this point addresses what you need to stay on point about. When Jesus says “nevertheless” he shifts the tone from reacting to Herod’s threat to acting on his mission. His immediate mission was to cast out demons and perform cures today and tomorrow. In v.33 he describes it “I must go on my way today and tomorrow and the day following.” And what does that mission involve? Going to Jerusalem. (v.22) Everyday Jesus is one day closer to death. Jesus knows that he will die, but not because of a threat from Herod, but as a fulfillment of God’s plan which means that he will die in Jerusalem. *“It cannot be that a prophet should perish away from Jerusalem.”* Jesus is not going to run from Herod and his threat to kill him because Jesus is on a mission to die, and he is going to do it on his terms in fulfillment of God’s plan. This is the 4th time in Luke’s gospel that Jesus says that he is going to die. (9.21-22; 44; 12.50 and here). Jesus accepts his role as a prophet and as a prophet who is

rejected, like so many others and will die. He embraces the fact that his death is part of his mission.

How do you think about death? Is there a calmness or panic; a confidence or fear, embracing or avoiding? If you have made no plans, no will, no conversations with family about arrangements, have you ever thought why not? If you are one of those who says that he/she doesn't like to talk about that stuff, why not? That won't stop you from dying. You can face this topic at any age with rest when you are in Christ. You can face this when you face it with God's promises: If God is for us, who can be against us? Who shall separate us from the love of God? Nothing! The Lord is on my side; I will not fear. What can man do to me?"

He finished his job of securing our salvation by fulfilling his mission. It was hard. It was grievous. He was rejected, misunderstood, maligned by his own countrymen. And he felt it. He felt it all. He was tempted in all aspects as we are. His road to walk was a costly road and we are called to walk after him. Beloved, following Jesus is good, but it is costly. In order to follow Jesus, move toward your death, that is, give up your life to God every day. Your dreams are way too small anyway. He calls us to enduring faithfulness. Enduring faithfulness is the superpower of the church. Related to that...

3. **God's plan is personal.** (34-35)

Jesus carried out his mission. He knew how it would end. He knew that Judas would betray him and yet he loved him anyway in such a way that the other disciples had no idea who the betrayer was until it came out. In a broader sense, here we see how much Jesus loves Jerusalem even though Jerusalem is going to kill him. These verses are deeply emotional. Jesus is broken over what Jerusalem has done to the other prophets which is a foreshadowing of what they are going to do to him and he knows what is going to happen to Jerusalem and he knows that had they accepted him instead of rejecting him that he would have gathered them together like a hen gathers her brood and would have cared for them. These are hard words to hear. "And you would not."

"Behold! (pay attention, mark my words) your house is forsaken." This is the language that Isaiah and Jeremiah used to describe the impending destruction of Solomon's temple by the Babylonians due to the rebellion of Judah. That temple was rebuilt then most recently restored on a grand scale by Herod the Great, father of Herod Antipas in v.31. What happened then was going to happen again.

A few weeks ago I read you a part of a description of the fall of Jerusalem and the destruction of the temple that Jesus was foretelling. We know many details because the Jewish historian Josephus was with the Roman general, Titus when Jerusalem was being destroyed. Josephus' parents were killed in the siege. His accounts of the battles, brutalities, the cannibalism, and destruction is overwhelming and really hard to hear. Hundreds of thousands of people died and if they did not die from starvation, they did in some of the most gruesome ways you can

imagine or in ways you can't. This city, this place where God put his name became a massive cemetery. It did not have to be this way.

Here is the heart of our Savior. He comes to a people who will hate him and who will receive the consequences for their rebellion. These people who hated Jesus hated Rome and brought the wrath of Rome against them. The Roman legionnaires were so full of hatred at the unrelenting stubbornness of the Jews that they razed the city and celebrated their inhumane brutalities. The contrast between the Roman conquerors who hated the Jews and Jesus who loved them is so extreme. But when you reject the King who would protect you, you get the world that will destroy you.

And yet, rejection and destruction will not have the final word. Jesus said (v.35) *"And I tell you, (there's more) you will not see me until you say, 'Blessed is he who comes in the name of the Lord.'"* Because Matthew places this event after the Triumphal Entry Jesus was not referring to that event when people actually said that about him. Look at that statement. Seeing Jesus comes after believing on Jesus. This is from Psalm 118 which was sung at the Feast of Tabernacles and the Passover. It was the last song that Jesus and the disciples sang at the Last Supper before they left for the Garden of Gethsemane. It is a song about deliverance and celebrates how the Lord has once again, rescued his people. Jesus is taking a well known song of deliverance and saying that when they realize that he is their God who has cared for them and delivered them all these years (and in years to come), then they will see him. I think that Jesus is referring to a future event when the Jewish people will see him because they will believe in him as the Messiah. They will bless him as the One who comes in the name of the Lord.

God raised up Israel as a people to show the world what a nation could look like and be like when they followed the Lord with their hearts. The OT is the story of their failure and unfaithfulness. Into the tree of God's people, God grafted in the Gentiles. Israel was called by grace and we are grafted in by grace. Our mission is to do what Israel did not. Make God's name known throughout the world by being a people who show that he is glorious and worth our trust, joy, holiness and faithfulness. One of the results, according to Romans 11, is that God will use the church as the means to call the nations to Jesus, but also to call the Jews to come home.

Romans 11.25-36