

Sermon: Preparing for the End

Text: Luke 13:31-35

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Introduction: The word is “determined.” Jesus was now looking ahead to Jerusalem. This was no pointless or casual journey; every step had purpose. Jesus was “preparing for the end” of his earthly mission. Jesus was determined to go to the holy city of David where he would finally be rejected by his own people. Even though the Jews were looking for a messiah, they would not recognize God’s Anointed.

John opens his gospel with these words: **John 1:10-11 (NIV)** ¹⁰He was in the world, and though the world was made through him, the world did not recognize him. ¹¹He came to that which was his own, but his own did not receive him.

Jesus’ mission was to show his people, God. When Jesus set out to follow God’s plan for his life, there were some anticipated results and reactions. When people are obedient to God:

I. People Can Feel Threatened (v. 31).

Luke 13:31 (NIV) ³¹At that time some Pharisees came to Jesus and said to him, “Leave this place and go somewhere else. Herod wants to kill you.”

A. Pharisees

There is a lot of discussion about trying to understand the motives of the Pharisees here. Were they honestly concerned for Jesus? Were they trying to maneuver him to where he could be better dealt with in Jerusalem, or were the Pharisees simply trying to avoid trouble and maintain their control with the people?

It is very easy to label groups of people and marginalize them. It can be done geographically (Yankee, Southerner), demographically (marketing strategies select groups to the exclusion of others by age, income, education, etc.), even religiously.

I’m inclined to think that out, away, from Jerusalem there may have some Pharisees who truly cared about Jesus’ welfare. Pharisee was not a bad word, nor did it always mean a bad person. Many had good character. Nicodemus and Joseph of Arimathea are prime examples.

And I think to be a Pharisee must have been like being a marine. Once a marine, always a marine. Apostle Paul was a Christian when Luke records: **Acts 23:6 (NIV)** ‘Then Paul, knowing that some of them were Sadducees and the others Pharisees, called out in the Sanhedrin, “My brothers, I am a Pharisee, the son of a Pharisee. I stand on trial because of my hope in the resurrection of the dead.”

All this aside, I know very well that when people’s influence and power seem to be threatened - matters can get mean and ugly. And then Jesus had told them that everyone needed to repent to enter the kingdom of God. Later, in Jerusalem, Jesus would experience what happens when you call into question a whole religious system.

B. Herod

There’s really not a lot of good things you can say about any of the Herods. Herod the Great exterminated babies shortly after Jesus was born to do away with the perceived threat of another king coming to power. He had many of his own family murdered out of jealousy. After Herod the Great died, Herod Antipas, his son, was given about a quarter of his territory - hence the title tetrarch. This area included Perea and Galilee.

We should be familiar with this Herod because he is the one who had John the Baptist executed by decapitation. John had been so open about his condemnation of Herod’s adulterous situation with Herod’s own brother’s wife. Later when Jesus was being charged in Jerusalem, Pilate would hand Jesus over to Herod for further interrogation. Religion and government have never had a healthy relationship. Power and influence always get in the way of what’s good for the people. Politics or politicians have no place in the church. One person says that politicians are like diapers, they should be changed often and for the same reason.

When people are obedient to God:
II. Goals Are Reached (v. 32).

Luke 13:32 (NIV) ³²He 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.’

Jesus continued his ministry and working toward Jerusalem in spite of Herod, that old fox, as he called him. This was no compliment by the way. In a fair fight between a fox and a mother hen, no one would give odds on the bird. No matter what it looks like, though, God is involved here; and the fox will ultimately lose.

A. Jesus sets people free.

It has always been Jesus' mission to set people free from sin and the hold the devil has on their lives. Whether you believe in demon possession or not, it is still real today. All of us are affected by this evil world, even followers of Jesus. And we need Jesus to help us navigate through this life.

Ephesians 6:12 (NIV) ¹²For our struggle is not against flesh and blood, but against the rulers, against the authorities, against the powers of this dark world and against the spiritual forces of evil in the heavenly realms.

People are full of guilt and shame and Jesus can set them free. People feel like no one loves them and that they have no value to others. Jesus can set *them* free. Jesus shows us how to love, even our enemies. He proved how valuable each and everyone of us is when he died on the cross.

B. Jesus heals people.

On his way to Jerusalem, Jesus still took time to heal people of their illnesses and diseases. He would heal lepers; Jesus would raise Lazarus from the dead. In the very next chapter Jesus heals a man of dropsy. Yet this was not his main ministry. Between here, in Perea, and the cross there was still much teaching to be done especially for his disciples.

Jesus still heals today, yet his main concern is our soul. He had told his disciples: **Matthew 10:28 (NIV)** ²⁸Do not be afraid of those who kill the body but cannot kill the soul. Rather, be afraid of the One who can destroy both soul and body in hell.

C. Jesus has a timetable.

Jesus' mission would not be derailed. He was completely aware of where he was going and why, and no self-important political appointee was going to change his course. Leon Morris says, "God, not Herod, will determine when He is to die." (*Luke* [IVP/Eerdmans], p. 228)

Jesus' work will be completed. There will be a time when Jesus will be able to say: "it is finished." Here Jesus sees this progression toward his goal when he says: "**today and tomorrow, and on the third day I will reach my goal.**"

I do not believe this is to be understood literally, only that Jesus has a short time left before he arrives at his intended destination: Jerusalem. Jesus' timetable is perfect, and it will be perfectly executed.

Romans 5:6-8 (NIV) ⁶You see, at just the right time, when we were still powerless, Christ died for the ungodly. ⁷Very rarely will anyone die for a righteous man, though for a good man someone might possibly dare to die. ⁸But God demonstrates his own love for us in this: While we were still sinners, Christ died for us.

Preparing for the end:

III. People Can Die (vv. 33-35).

Luke 13:33-35 (NIV) ³³In any case, I must keep going today and tomorrow and the next day—for surely no prophet can die outside Jerusalem! ³⁴“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! ³⁵Look, 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.’”

Jerusalem is mentioned in Luke 90 times. In the rest of the N.T., Jerusalem is only mentioned 45 more times.

People can die:

A. As a result of obedience to God

There had been a long list of prophets who had given their lives in service of God. Isaiah, a prophet to the people of God near Jerusalem, was martyred by being sawed in half. His only crime: he told his people to trust God rather than man-made governments. He told them that God was their only refuge. Jeremiah was stoned to death for his preaching. He wrote Lamentations in the O.T. Just like Jesus, he wept over the spiritual condition of God's people.

Now, Jesus, “God's final prophet,” would willingly walk the same road as those who had spoken for God in the past. In fact, in our text it leaves us with the idea that this was Jesus' duty, his obligation. This was something Jesus must do.

Jerusalem was such an important symbol of God's love for his people. It is where God dwelt. Yet so many of God's people had been killed there because they dared to speak the words of God. Jesus would be next.

What the people did not understand was that when they rejected Jesus, they were rejecting God.

Preparing for the end, People Can Die:

B. As a consequence of disobedience to God

Jerusalem is known for killing the Lord's prophets, but there also is a pattern of Jerusalem being punished for her lack of faith and obedience. Nothing has changed. When we reject God, he will leave us. When we insist that we do not want or need him, God will allow us to have our way - even when it leads to destruction. God is like the parent who tells a child what is best for them. The parent sees the child reject his counsel, the child fails, and the parent weeps over that child.

Jerusalem was going to be destroyed because of their lack of faith in God's Messiah. They will be left "desolate." The word desolate is supplied to the translation, but the word "left" (αφημι) means to forsake. Regarding Jerusalem, "It means 'you have it entirely to yourself to possess and protect; for God no longer dwells in it and protects it'" (Plummer). - Rienecker, p. 182

When a person tells God to leave him alone, God will. This always results in God's protection being removed.

As a consequence of disobedience to God (by man), Jesus had to suffer also, even though he was without sin. Jesus would have to pay the price for *our* sin with his life and blood. Jesus was now on his way to Jerusalem where he would be crucified on a Roman cross. Jesus did this to demonstrate how much he loved us.

John 3:16-18 (NIV) ¹⁶"For God so loved the world that he gave his one and only Son, that whoever believes in him shall not perish but have eternal life. ¹⁷For God did not send his Son into the world to condemn the world, but to save the world through him. ¹⁸Whoever believes in him is not condemned, but whoever does not believe stands condemned already because he has not believed in the name of God's one and only Son.

The Fire: An article in *National Geographic* several years ago provided a penetrating picture of God's wings. After a forest fire in Yellowstone National Park, forest rangers began their trek up a mountain to assess the inferno's damage.

One ranger found a bird literally petrified in ashes, perched like a statue on the ground at the base of a tree. Somewhat sickened by the eerie sight, he knocked over the bird with a stick. When he struck it, three tiny chicks scurried from under their dead mother's wings. The loving mother, keenly aware of impending disaster, had carried her offspring to the base of the tree and had gathered them under her wings, instinctively knowing that the toxic smoke would rise. She could have flown to safety but had refused to abandon her babies. When the blaze had arrived and the heat had singed her small body, the mother had remained steadfast. Because she had been willing to die, so those under the cover of her wings would live.

The Psalmist writes: **Psalms 17:8 (NIV)** ⁸ Keep me as the apple of your eye; hide me in the shadow of your wings.

Psalms 91:4 (NIV) ⁴ He will cover you with his feathers, and under his wings you will find refuge; his faithfulness will be your shield and rampart.

You can depend on God's love. Let God protect you. Let God gather you to His heart.

Conclusion: "Preparing for the end," Jesus will now concentrate more on teaching his disciples. He has given notice of his intentions to die and now he is training those who will carry on in his absence. Sacrifice is required in following God. Every follower must take up his cross. Love is also a requirement.

Have you noticed it is Jesus' enemies over whom he weeps? The very people who will kill Jesus brings a lament to his lips. Jerusalem will get what she has coming, but in the meantime Jesus prays for her citizens. I wonder, those of us who are Christians, how much we cry over the enemies of the cross? Jesus' life story is told as a model for his followers. We should pray for those who do not love us.

When Jesus comes in the clouds, I pray we all can shout: **Blessed is He who comes in the name of the Lord!**

Until then, Jesus' message is the same: repent, and it remains time-sensitive. Jesus still comes today in love to gather mankind to himself. Those who refuse to listen and reject him, do so at their own peril.

Please acknowledge him as your Lord, today!