

*Second Sunday in Lent*

February 28, 2010

Amazing Grace Lutheran Church - Pastor Chip Wilke

Luke 13:31-55

*At that time some Pharisees came to Jesus and said to him, "Leave this place and go somewhere else. Herod wants to kill you." He 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.' In any case, I must keep going today and tomorrow and the next day--for surely no prophet can die outside Jerusalem! '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! Look, 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.'"* (NIV)

Rejection hurts. Would any of us argue that point? Whether it is something really big or small anytime anyone is rejected for any reason it doesn't feel very good? The kid who is told he isn't good enough to make the team or the high school student who isn't cool enough to hang out with the "in" crowd, knows the hurt of rejection. You realize the pain of rejection when the college of your choice doesn't let you in, or the person who could hand you the job you always wanted says: "thanks, but no thanks." If you've ever loved someone very close to you (a boyfriend, a mother, a child) and that person tells you in no uncertain terms that they do not love you back, then you understand that sometimes rejection really hurts.

This morning we have another example of a rejection. It is a painful rejection. The one being rejected is One who loves more than anyone could ever love, and yet He is rejected by many. He is another prophet, the Prophet, that many want dead. He is a person about whom the apostle John writes: "**He came to that which was his own, but his own did not receive him**" (1). Once again we see Jesus, God's own Son, being rejected. As we focus on these words from the good doctor Luke we learn that: **Rejection hurts but doesn't stop our Savior.**

Our text begins with known enemies of Jesus warning Jesus about another enemy. "*At that time some Pharisees came to Jesus and said to him, "Leave this place and go somewhere else. Herod wants to kill you."* The Pharisees were the Jewish religious teachers, and the majority of them were constantly at odds with Jesus. In short, they rejected Jesus. Time and time again Jesus tried to teach them - why they needed Him - why He came - how He loved them. But while they studied the Scriptures they continually refused to believe that the Scriptures testified about Jesus. Now they tell Jesus to get out of there (most likely Perea or Galilee) because Herod wants to kill Him. That would be just like Herod who also rejected Jesus and already beheaded Jesus' cousin John the Baptist.

The reason Pharisees would come and tell this to Jesus is debated. Were they looking to trap Jesus? Were these a few Pharisees who actually showed concern for Jesus? Most think they did not have Jesus best interests at heart. Perhaps, the best answer is that they might have just been pawns used by Herod. That is who Jesus addresses in His reply as he calls Herod a fox. That wasn't meant by Jesus as a

compliment. Jesus was calling Herod a slippery, cunning, and deceitful person. And Jesus told Herod that He would not leave, but would continue to do His work. And Jesus' work would come to fulfillment in Jerusalem.

For it is not just Herod, it is not just the Pharisees, that reject Jesus. He was rejected by many, and by many of His own Jewish people, for whom He came. Listen carefully to Jesus' words: *"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!"* *"Look, your house is left to you desolate."*

Rejection hurts. Do you see how much it hurts Jesus? *"Jerusalem, Jerusalem,"* Jesus laments. His heart aches for the city and people in it. He wants them to listen. He wants them as His own. He loves them and wants to bless them, but **they were not willing!** They reject God's messengers and they reject Jesus again and again. How often Jesus tried, but they refused. Their rejection hurts. On Palm Sunday as Jesus approached Jerusalem He looked at this city and began to cry. Jesus wasn't crying for Himself but for them. He loved them, but so many of them rejected His love. He came to save them, but so many of them rejected the salvation Jesus came to bring. Jesus says their house is left desolate. Jerusalem was spiritually bankrupt and one day would be physically too as the Romans would destroy it in 70 A.D..

Jesus says they will not see Him again until they say: *'Blessed is he who comes in the name of the Lord.'* These are words spoken of the Messiah in Psalm 118 and words that would be spoken by the crowds on Palm Sunday. But Jesus also repeats this whole lament over Jerusalem after Palm Sunday. This is also a warning for the people that the next time many of them will see Jesus, He will return not to save but to judge.

Does it make us angry to see Jesus rejected like this? Are we sad to see Jesus hurt by such rejection? Before we start putting our noses in the air and start pointing our fingers, before we stand up like Peter saying *"even if all the others run away I will be willing to die for you Jesus,"* we should look into our own hearts and examine our own actions. Have we, like Peter, ever denied Jesus in the face of worldly peer pressure? Have we, like the other disciples in the Garden, ever run when the heat of following Christ got a little too much for us? There have been times we have rejected Jesus too, haven't there? Isn't our every sin a slap to our Savior's face? We are the reason the Son of Man had to go to Jerusalem too and be rejected. Our sins would cause Jesus to bleed and die. Our every rejection and rebellion against God and His Word was laid on Jesus there. How many times have we grieved Jesus by going our own way of sin and missing out on His blessings?

Yet, although the Savior was despised and rejected, though his enemies were great, though such rejection hurts, Jesus would not be deterred from His mission. He knew what must be done to save sinners. He told the Pharisees to tell Herod: *'I will drive out demons and heal people today and tomorrow, and on the third day I will reach my goal.'* *In any case, I must keep going today and tomorrow and the next day--for surely no prophet can die outside Jerusalem!"* Jesus would not be killed by Herod in his territory because He would die in Jerusalem. So Jesus would keep preaching and healing and teaching and driving out demons until the time set by His Father. Then, there in Jerusalem, Jesus would do the unthinkable. The Righteous would die for the unrighteous. The sinless Son of God would lay down His perfect life as a sacrifice for

sinner. The Holy One would suffer hell and be punished on the cross so that the guilty could be set free. And Jesus' goal would be reached when His grave was empty and the world saved. Jesus came to provide you and me and all people the gift of salvation.

Salvation is what Jesus wants to freely give to all people. That's what Jesus has won for all people. That is why it hurts Jesus so much when people reject Him. It hurts them because Jesus knows what they are missing - "***how often I have longed to gather your children together, as a hen gathers her chicks under her wings.***" What do we mean when we call someone a mother hen? Isn't that a person who is always looking out for their child, hovering over them, watching them and making sure they are nearby so that nothing happens to them?

I don't think I have ever been around real hens to witness them in action, but I have seen other birds. Ever try to get near baby ducks or geese? When Lisa and I lived in Milwaukee there were walking paths out back and one time there were some baby geese next to the path. As we tried to walk past the mother goose came out honking and biting and chased us right out of there. So we decided it was best to go another route. Now think about what Jesus wants for us and all people. He wants to bring us safety under His care. He wants to shelter us with His love. He wants to put us under His wings where there is peace and forgiveness. He wants to keep us from all harm - from sin, death, and the devil. He wants to guide us safely home to heaven.

That's why our Savior would not be stopped - not by Herod, not by some Pharisees, not by the rejection of Jerusalem or us for that matter. In fact, Jesus was willing to be hurt and be rejected by men, even more than that Jesus was willing to be rejected by God on the cross. Jesus did not just cry over Jerusalem, but He died for Jerusalem, for us. Jesus did so, so that you and I will never have to be rejected by God the Father. He has brought you and me by faith safely under His wings. There Jesus forgives us for all our sins, even for our foolish rejection and rebellion. There Jesus protects us. Now even if all other helpers flee, we have God's promise: "***Never will I leave you; never will I forsake you.***" Rejoice, dear friends, in a Savior who was rejected to save us. As the hymnwriter puts it, it is nothing less than: **Love so Amazing, so divine, Demands my soul, my life, my all. (CW 125) Amen.**