

GOD HOLDS US STEADY
SECOND SUNDAY IN LENT

LUKE 13:31-35
FEB 21, 2016

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 would not! 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!' "

Text reminds me of a story you may have heard also.

One dark night, a Navy warship steaming along
and spotted a light dead ahead.

This was before modern technology so signal was sent out
using Morse code: change course 10 degrees to right."

Signal came back,

"negative, you change course 10 degrees to right."

Ship sent another signal, "Change your course;
this is a U.S. warship."

Another signal came back, "Change your course;
this is a U. S. lighthouse."

Two things about this story are similar to text and to us.

One is that we, like Jesus are pressured to change course.

Other is things may not be as they seem.

But text shows how God gives us

CONTINUED CARE IN RESPONSE TO THREATS

COMPASSION IN RESPONSE TO REJECTION

CONFIDENCE IN RESPONSE TO TROUBLE

CONTINUED CARE IN RESPONSE TO THREATS

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.'

This happens as Jesus is on way to Jerusalem
for what will be last time.

Possibly in Perea, region east of Jordan from Jerusalem,
ruled by Herod Antipas, who also ruled Galilee,
while Pontius Pilate ruled Judea.

It appears Pharisees, who oppose Jesus more and more
actually do care enough to keep him from being killed.

Herod, who had already killed John the Baptist,
thought Jesus was John come back to life,
because he first heard of Jesus after John's death.

So, Pharisees warn, now he wants to kill Jesus.

But I don't think this is really true.

First, Pharisees themselves already want him dead.

Second, Herod killed John reluctantly, only because of wife,
and later, when Jesus was sent to him by Pilate,

He is only curious about him & timid, & sent him back.

Besides, if Jesus did go back home, Herod rules Galilee too.

Jesus shows he knows this by calling Herod a fox.

Not a deadly threat like a wolf, lion or bear.

So why do Pharisees say this? because they can tell

Jesus is going to Jerusalem, their headquarters.

Jesus has come to Jerusalem before, stirred things up,
and then left again, but now he is more popular

They are afraid he will now try to establish his authority,
which will bring on destruction by the Romans.

So they are like a bird squawking and flapping
when someone is too close to its nest.

But it is not as it may seem to them either.

They are ones into politics but Jesus is no political threat.

Which Pilate and Herod later confirm.

Jesus is not reaching out to attack them, but to embrace them
as he does every other sinner.

Jesus is actually trying to warn and save them
from a more powerful and sly enemy, the devil.

So how does Jesus respond to this warning and threat?

He says no, you go instead & report I will not change course.

He keeps doing what he does, taking care of those
in real danger by casting out demons and healing.

He doesn't fear death threats because he raises the dead.

He has power far greater than Herod.

He isn't afraid because he knows how he is destined to die,

He will not die fighting but surrendering.
not as a helpless victim but as a willing sacrifice
as God himself plans for our salvation.

In O.T. reading Jeremiah was threatened in similar way
because he was seen as a threat rather than a helper
trying to warn people to avoid danger.

The same thing can happen as we follow God's course for us,
living in countercultural purity, sharing both law and gospel,
defending the weak from injustice.

We can seem to be a threat to those who want
to live as they please without feeling guilty.

Paul reveals in Epistle, real motive for rejecting God
and his servants is desire for selfish gain.

We can be threatened by them in return
and pressured to go away and keep quiet.

But things are not as they seem.

We are to be salt on earth not to sting but to preserve.

We are in no real danger that is not in God's plan
which also includes our ultimate rescue from death.

So, like Jesus and Jeremiah, we too can stand firm
and keep on caring about others,

Not taking criticism or attacks at face value,
not spooked by Satan's tricks to turn
and run into real danger of disobedience or despair.

We can keep caring for others, not just ourselves
because of Jesus'...

COMPASSION IN RESPONSE TO REJECTION

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
would not!

For centuries Jerusalem has been headquarters of faith,
a home for spiritual leaders.

The name Jerusalem means city of peace.

But Jesus says things are not as they would seem.

Jerusalem was actually a place of death for spiritual leaders
because they weren't recognized for what they were.

Why?

Word here for hen, in original language not just chicken
but any bird, but context implies a chicken.

Birds in real life are also recognized in part by context.
You may feel different about what looks like eagles
soaring over a river valley
than about what looks like vultures circling you in desert.
So it is when God comes at us like bird with outstretched wings.
those who feel guilty are apt to run & hide like rat or mouse.
This is what people of Jerusalem did in days of Jeremiah
and other prophets, what some did when Jesus came,
and what people will still do today.
But things are not as they seem.
God is not coming at us with outstretched wings
to grab us like a hawk but to gather us into protection.
Jesus weeps when he is rejected
by those whose hatred is caused by fear
because his reason for coming in first place is compassion.
He always comes to us with mercy,
even when it may not always look that way.
He is not trying to make our lives harder but better.
Sometimes little children may run away from their parents,
thinking it is fun game, but this can result in real danger.
We may feel like running from God at times
thinking that he will be too limiting or confining
and will end our fun.
but not realize how dangerous this is.
But as parents who continue to call to children
and grab at them with even more determination,
Jesus does not reject those who reject him
but continues to pray, "Father forgive them,
for they do not know what they are doing."
So, like Paul who wept for those who were enemies of cross,
we too can respond even to rejection
with continued compassion.
People who reject or threaten us are not our enemy.
Real enemy is Satan who wants to hurt them as well
& who always threatens us when we do too much good.
We can have compassion, even when rejected
because of Jesus'

CONFIDENCE IN RESPONSE TO TROUBLE

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!' "

The house Jesus is talking about here is the temple,
which the Pharisees treated as theirs,
but was really to be God's house.
Their fear was that it would be forsaken,
that either people would stop coming and listening to them,
or that they would be driven out by the Romans
if they weren't careful not to antagonize them.
But real danger was that it would be forsaken by God himself
as happened in O.T., because of their unfaithfulness
even though they kept using it for their rituals.
This can happen to churches today.
Sometimes when numbers are down, there is temptation
to do whatever it takes to keep people coming,
whether being more entertaining or keeping quiet about sin.
but real danger is that people do come
but don't find the real God here.
Jesus knows what will happen to temple,
it will be destroyed by the Romans
But it won't be needed for sacrifices any more anyway
because real temple where God is found
is not that building but the body of Jesus.
There is a lot of irony in text. Pharisees want Jesus,
who is God, to forsake and stay away from his temple,
so he does until Palm Sunday when people say
exactly what he predicts when God comes again:
"Blessed is he who comes in the name of the Lord."
and also what we say when he comes again today
with his body and blood in Holy Communion
to give us forgiveness.
Jesus knows temple of his body will be destroyed too.
but this is not as it seems, not failure but victory.
He keeps going to Jerusalem because he knows
as v. 32 says, on third day he will finish,
that is when he rises from dead on third day.
to bring forgiveness and everlasting life.
This is why something else will happen to God's house,
that is the church, the people in whom God lives.
word in v. 35 for forsaken means let go, released.
same word is used in Bible for forgiveness.
God wants to get rid of our sins, let go, abandon them.
When we hold on to them, we are forsaken with them.

But God wants to separate us from our sins.

He wants not to forsake his house but to forgive it.

When Jerusalem rejects God's embrace for too long,
judgment and destruction finally comes.

But even when destruction comes, it is not too late
to return to God who returns to us with blessings.

God continues to hold out the hope of forgiveness
to us and to others.

because Jesus has finished his course
and achieved forgiveness for our sins.

because Jesus offers...

CONTINUED CARE IN RESPONSE TO THREATS

which are not what they seem,

so that we can continue caring for others as well.

Jesus offers COMPASSION IN RESPONSE TO REJECTION,
reaching out to gather those who are afraid

so that we, under his care, can do this as well.

Jesus offers CONFIDENCE IN RESPONSE TO TROUBLE,

knowing how he will complete his goal of saving us,
of which we can be confident, no matter what, as well.