

Love Like No Other

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[0:00] Well, this morning as we open the Word of God, we find Jesus having another encounter with! the Pharisees. And if you don't know who the Pharisees were, they were a religious group! of Jews in Jesus' day. They were concerned with being personally devoted to God and with meticulously following the law of God. But they were off on some things. They had many of their own laws and traditions that they had collected over time. They had all kinds of rituals and ceremonial purity things that they practiced. And they kind of got to this place where they saw themselves as the authority on true religion amongst the Jews. And of course, as we've seen through the Gospel of Luke, there's been conflict between Jesus and the Pharisees. The Pharisees have been going after Jesus about all kinds of things. They're firmly opposed to Him. And Jesus has been rebuking the Pharisees for their hypocrisy and their greed and for leading people astray.

Well, this morning we get to see another very brief encounter with the Pharisees. And it brings out some things about Jesus that are precious. So let's look at it here in Luke chapter 13.

And we're starting in verse 31. At that time, some Pharisees came to Jesus and said to Him, Leave this place and go somewhere else.

Herod wants to kill you. Jesus replied, Go tell that fox, I will keep on driving out demons and healing people today and tomorrow.

And on the third day, I will reach my goal. In any case, I must press on today and tomorrow and the next day.

[2:02] For surely, no prophet can die outside Jerusalem. We heard last week that Jesus is right now on His way to the city of Jerusalem.

And He's not traveling in the most direct way, but He's kind of meandering through all the villages and towns on His way there. And we listened last week to Jesus answer that question of how many will be saved.

He talked about the door of salvation being very narrow. He encouraged the people to make every effort to enter through that door.

And He spoke about how many would find themselves cast out of the kingdom of God at the end.

Well, at that time, same moment or conversation, Luke tells us, some Pharisees come to Jesus and they say this to Him.

Leave this place. Go somewhere else. Herod wants to kill you. It's no surprise, of course, that the Pharisees want Jesus to get out of town because they hate Him.

[3:21] And the Pharisees will play a big part in Jesus' death in the days ahead. But let's not miss the significance of this moment. God has sent Jesus to speak to the people.

And as we heard last Sunday, Jesus has come to teach in their streets and to call the people to repent so that they can enter into the kingdom of God and be saved.

And what's the response of the Pharisees to Jesus? Get out of here. We don't want to see you anymore.

We don't want you here. Go somewhere else. They reject Jesus. They reject God's messenger.

And the Pharisees sort of add in this little detail. They say, Herod wants to kill you. Herod was the ruler of the region of Galilee up in the north of Israel. Jesus did a lot of ministry in Galilee.

[4:31] And as we hear sort of this little piece of information from the Pharisees, it gets us wondering and thinking, you know, did Herod really want to kill Jesus?

Not too long from now, he's going to hope to see Jesus so that he'll do a miracle. Or is he just sort of telling the Pharisees to say this to Jesus, hoping that Jesus will just stay out of his area?

Or are the Pharisees just making this up because they just want Jesus to get away from them? And if Herod did want to kill Jesus, what's the reason?

Is it just because of the tension that's happening between Jesus and the leaders of the Jews? Well, there's no clear answer to these questions, but we do get Jesus' reply.

Jesus says, Go tell that fox, I will keep on driving out demons and healing people today and tomorrow, and on the third day, I will reach my goal.

[5:34] Now, I don't know about you, what the first thing that pops out to you in that statement is, but for me, it's that word fox. And it's kind of a chuckle that Jesus calls Herod a fox, but we should use discernment here too.

Jesus is not just doing that sort of, you know, sinful name calling that we sometimes have done, and neither is he insulting Herod. He's not trying to dehumanize him.

And this isn't the only time that Jesus will call someone sort of an animal name. He will later call the Pharisees a brood of vipers. And there's truth in the metaphor that Jesus chooses.

Now, there's some debate over what is that truth. When we refer to someone as a fox today, we often are talking about somebody being clever or sly or sneaky, but usually in a bad way.

Back in Jesus' day, to call someone a fox could either have meant deceptive or destructive or pathetic. Kind of like a nipping fox rather than a fierce and majestic lion of a ruler.

[6:52] Now, of course, the commentators will go back and forth over which one Jesus meant. Whatever the case, Jesus is highlighting something true and real about Herod.

He was a wicked man. He was corrupt. He was ungodly. He wasn't particularly powerful or majestic. He was only a tetrarch under the rule of the Roman Empire.

But probably the thing that comes to mind most that relates to this, we remember the evil thing that Herod did when he beheaded John the baptizer.

That was both Jesus' relative and a prophet that God had sent. And so, the Pharisees are poisonous vipers and Herod truly was a fox.

He had already made a kill. And Jesus has a message for the Pharisees to give back to Herod. He says, go, tell that fox, I will keep on driving out demons and healing people today and tomorrow.

[8:08] And on the third day, I will reach my goal. So Herod wants to kill me for what? What? Jesus basically points out he hasn't done anything wrong.

Nothing to deserve being killed. Like, why does he want to kill me? For healing people? For setting people free from demon possession?

No. You tell him that I will keep on doing these things until I'm finished. Jesus kind of just dismisses Herod's threat.

Maybe even reminds Herod a little bit that he's doing these things by a higher authority. But it's a reminder again that Jesus is being opposed.

He's being hated for no good reason. Look at all the good that Jesus has been doing for people. Healings of all kinds.

[9:12] Illnesses, diseases, disabilities. People being set free from evil spirits and yet they want to be rid of Jesus. Jesus gives a sort of schedule here.

The today, tomorrow, and on the third day or on the next day part of the verse. And most Bible students looking at this take this to be figurative rather than actual.

If we read carefully in the Gospel of Luke we'll notice that it's much more than three days before Jesus actually arrives at Jerusalem. And so most conclude that he's speaking figuratively like I will keep on doing what I've been doing for the time being for the next little while but it won't be too long before I am finally killed in Jerusalem.

It won't be by Herod. It won't be in Galilee. It will be in Jerusalem. And these words of Jesus leave us kind of speechless.

I must press on today and tomorrow and the next day for surely no prophet can die outside Jerusalem. What do we even say to that?

[10:42] If you were there in that moment what would you say? It's such a sad and stark reminder of how evil the people of Israel have been over the centuries leading up to this.

God has sent prophet after prophet after prophet to deliver his message and what have they done? By and large they have rejected them.

They have killed them. And not just a few but so many over the centuries. And the pinnacle of the rejection ironically happens in Jerusalem.

And it shouldn't be that way. Jerusalem should be the holy city. That's the place where the Lord's temple was. If there's any place where people sincerely worship God and listen to his messengers it

should have been Jerusalem.

The place where God chose to put his name. And yet it's there in the capital city that God's messengers have been executed and killed again and again and again.

[11 : 58] This statement of Jesus is loaded. Surely no prophet can die outside Jerusalem. The death of the prophets in Jerusalem reveals that it wasn't just the citizens of Israel who rejected the Lord and his messengers.

It was the very leaders of Israel. The priests even. The king. Jerusalem in a sense was the heart of Israel.

It was the place that all the people of the nation went to three times a year to worship the Lord or so it was supposed to be. But with how things are going and have gone it's like Jesus is saying the very heart of this nation has rejected God's messengers over and over again and so it would be shocking if it didn't go that way again.

Now I don't think Jesus is being skeptical or cynical the way that we sometimes are. I don't think he's bitter the way that we sometimes are.

I think rather this is deep sorrow a holy frustration in the heart of Jesus. I think the statement is intended to get our attention and to help us see that the same pattern the same awful and wicked cycle that has happened for centuries is about to unfold again.

[13 : 33] God sends his man to give his message to his people and they reject him and kill him. But there's also something very beautiful here.

Did you notice how Jesus describes his death? I'll put it on screen so you can see. Herod wants to kill you.

Jesus refers or replies to that saying on the third day I will reach my goal for no prophet can die outside Jerusalem.

What is Jesus' goal? His goal is reached by his death. That's what he's deliberately moving toward. This is no surprise to him that he's going to die. This is the plan. He knows the plan can only be fulfilled by doing the things God has given him to do so that the opposition continues to grow and grow so that it does kind of come to that moment that culminate in that moment where he is killed.

[14 : 54] And do you hear that necessariness? I must press on for surely no prophet can die outside Jerusalem.

I must continue on the path that leads to my death because that's the way I reach my goal. all the pressure could go away for Jesus.

All the threats and opposition could go away if Jesus simply stops doing what he has been doing. If he gives in to the Pharisees and to Herod.

But Jesus' goal, his purpose, his plan, and the father's is not to avoid suffering. The goal that Jesus has come for requires his death in Jerusalem.

Just like all the prophets who came before, Jesus must face that rejection in the very heart of his people because that's how atonement will be made.

[16 : 05] That's how the mission will be accomplished. The mission to save us. That's why Jesus says on the cross right before he dies, it is finished.

What's beautiful here is how unflinching Jesus is in the face of the opposition and the threats. He knows exactly what he's come to do.

He has come to save his people from their sins, to make atonement, to reconcile us to God. And he knows that his death is required and he doesn't hesitate.

He doesn't shrink back. He presses forward right into the fire of it. There's a determination in the love of Jesus for you and for me.

He keeps moving forward towards the suffering, towards the agony, towards the threats and the hurt of his enemies.

[17 : 25] He is focused, he is determined to lay down his life to save us. And the next words of Jesus here, they just sort of open the floodgates of his heart.

We see just how deep his love is and how intense his compassion is. Verse 34, Jerusalem, Jerusalem, you who killed the prophets and stoned those sent to you, how often I have longed to gather your children together as a hen gathers her chicks under her wings.

and you were not willing. Can you feel the heartache inside these words of Jesus?

When people scorn him and reject him, he feels it deeply. Their rejection burns his very soul.

He grieves. He weeps. Later in the story, we will even see him cry in public.

[18:43] he says, he longs to gather them. How often I have longed to gather your children together as a hen gathers her chicks under her wings.

This picture is so intimate and loving. And look at what Jesus calls them, the people of Jerusalem. I have longed to gather your children.

This isn't just about a city or a place. He's thinking of the people there. They're like wayward sons and daughters who have gone off the rails in life and he longs like a dad or a mom to bring them back together so that they can be with him and they can be close.

But they won't have it. And this isn't just a one time feeling of Jesus. He says how often I have felt this.

Like again and again and again and again. Have you ever felt intense longing over a long period of time for a broken relationship to be restored?

[20:05] Lord, this is like that times a thousand. If you think about every time Jesus made this trip to Jerusalem three times a year, he's reminded of this, how the heart of his people is cold and dark towards God.

And it breaks his heart. We see a little glimpse of it in John's gospel when he drives out the merchants and the money changers from the temple courts.

This is the place that you're to come to talk to God, to pray, to draw near to him, not to do business. And I believe that we get a little glimpse of the divine nature of Jesus shining through in these words.

Because it's not just that Jesus has longed for the restoration of this broken relationship, you know, as often as he went to Jerusalem growing up. I mean, what is Jesus lamenting here?

He's lamenting the rejection and the murder of the prophets over the past centuries. He's crying over that. Why?

[21:24] Why? Because he himself is the God who sent them. That's what he's talking about when he says, how often I have longed.

You who kill the prophets and stone those sent to you, how often I have longed to gather your children together. Do you hear the voice of God speaking through Jesus? Jesus. Jesus. Many attempts have been made to fix this broken relationship, but they were not willing.

The last verse here, verse 35, has both a warning and a note of hope. He says, 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. Let's look at the warning first.

He says, look, your house is left to you desolate. I think Jesus means something like, if you reject me, then there's nothing left for you.

[22:44] You'll be left to yourselves. You'll be abandoned. You'll be desolate. Like a house no longer lived in. What happens to a house when there's nobody living in it?

Well, eventually it collapses. Or it's vandalized by somebody, ruined by others. And sadly, this is exactly what will happen to Jerusalem. About 40 years later, AD 70, war breaks out, the Romans come, and they utterly destroy the city.

your house is left to you desolate. You will not see me again. But then there's this strange note of hope at the end.

You will not see me again until you say, blessed is he who comes in the name of the Lord. Those words come from Psalm 118, a fascinating psalm.

And one of the themes of that psalm is how God's love never ends. It never fails. It just keeps going on and on forever.

[23:58] And in that psalm, it speaks of how Israel would be wise to put their trust in the Lord and to take refuge in him. It also speaks of severe discipline.

But then it goes on to say in Psalm 118, that the stone, the builders rejected, has become the cornerstone. And then at the end we hear this shout of praise, blessed is he who comes in the name of the Lord.

It's as though Jesus is saying, Jerusalem, though for a time you will be abandoned and desolate, there's coming a day when you will welcome your Messiah.

there's coming a day when you embrace the one who comes in the name of Yahweh. And on that day the response will be so different than it is now.

They will praise the Lord, the God of their ancestors. There are other places in the Bible that seem to describe this moment as well.

[25 : 05] a moment in which they will look upon the one they had pierced and they will mourn. They will grieve, realizing painfully the wrong that they as a city had done to the one that God sent them long ago.

If I understand some of the prophetic portions of scripture correctly, it will be a day of salvation and rejoicing, a day of rescue, for Jerusalem and its people, a day of being delivered from the enemies that surround them.

You will not see me again until that day, the day that you say, blessed is he who comes in the name of the Lord. What's beautiful about this is the love that we see here of God for his people.

we've seen that he's unflinching and deliberate in his love. He will suffer and die for us on purpose. And some will perish because they reject him, yes, but even that doesn't erase or diminish his love for these people.

people, there is still a hope. And I hope that these words of Jesus are an encouragement to you this morning.

[26 : 40] Maybe you're here and you know that this week was yet another week of blowing it. not your best week. Maybe you can think of a few wrong decisions made or thoughts, thought or things said or done, failings, to be patient and gentle and considerate.

but what these words of Jesus tell me is that Jesus loves me at my very worst. They tell me that when things are not as they should be between me and him, he is longing intensely to fix any breach in the relationship.

These words tell me that he is exceeding patient. How many prophets did he send over the centuries? How many chances does he give us?

And even after sending his own son, the ultimate prophet, it's not the end of the story for Jerusalem.

If we've accepted Christ and are following him, our relationship with Jesus is not like this.

We're not at odds with him or with God. We don't need to fear being left to ourselves or abandoned.

We remember that promise Jesus made.

[28 : 19] I will never leave you or forsake you. I will be with you with you always, even to the end of the age. But I think these words still give us a glimpse of the depth of his love for people and the patience.

Well, we'll hear more next week from Jesus as one of the Pharisees invites Jesus over for dinner. And there's some interesting things that go down there.

Let's pray. Lord Jesus, we want to ask for your forgiveness for the times when we've been like the Pharisees and pushed you away and ignored you and not wanted to have you near.

we want to ask for your forgiveness for those times when we've been like the people of Jerusalem and been stubborn and hard-hearted and unwilling to listen.

Softener our hearts, Lord Jesus. Put in us that willingness to respond to you. We thank you for your amazing love for us.

[29 : 40] While we were still sinners, you gave your life for ours. You died for us. We give you praise and we love you.

In your name, amen.