

Jesus, Herod and Jerusalem

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[0 : 00] to be a real man, do you have to be the strong, silent, stoic type, the guy who never shows his emotions, stands aloof from everyone else?

What is real masculinity? If we're Christians, we're not to take our models of masculinity from Hollywood, nor even from standards of masculinity lived out in previous generations. You want to be a real man? Be like Jesus Christ, not James Bond. In these verses, we catch somewhat of a glimpse of the masculinity of Jesus. At this stage in the story, Jesus and His disciples are traveling to Jerusalem. He's just a few short weeks away from being arrested, tortured, and crucified. He is attracting huge crowds to see Him performing miracles and to hear Him preaching the good news of the kingdom of God. And it's now we read, some Pharisees came and said to Him, get away from here, for Herod wants to kill you. Now, that's a very strange thing, because by and large, the Pharisees have already rejected Jesus. They hate Him, so why warn Him?

Maybe these Pharisees were sympathetic, but more probably it's because they were in Herod's payroll and were threatening Jesus. If you heard that someone wanted to kill you, you'd go and tell the police, right? But what if the police were also in on the plot? So, how will Jesus respond to what the Pharisees say? His reaction to them tells us so much about how to be a real man under pressure in both the things He said and the way He expressed His feelings. Remember, Luke's first readers were early Christians who were also being threatened by the authorities, threatened by death by the authorities on account of their faith in Jesus, and this passage may well help them to channel their emotions and reactions at times of similar persecution. Well, in this passage, Jesus displays four masculine emotions and attitudes, contempt, confidence, anguish, and hope. To be a real Christian man, to be like Jesus, we must not be afraid to express our emotions and be deeply sensitive to the world around us.

Because if we make it our ambition to live like Jesus, we should also make it our ambition to feel like Jesus. His first reaction then at the beginning of verse 32 was contempt, contempt.

[3 : 08] Jesus' immediate reply to the Pharisees is to turn them into His messengers to Herod rather than Herod's messengers to Him. Go tell that fox, He says. In the world of the day, a fox was seen as a sly creature, sly creature. Sleeket. Herod had sent these Pharisees to try and control Jesus' movements.

You see, Herod was a pawn in a Roman game of political chess, and he wanted to make Jesus a pawn in his own political game. Herod had been so near to the kingdom, but had consciously turned his back on the gospel preached to him by John the Baptist, and later had John executed. For Herod, life was all about the politics of power, not about righteousness and salvation. Herod was the epitome of all that was wrong with Israel, a type A man. But a fox in Jesus' day was also a picture of a worthless person. For all that he was a king and a majestic figure to be respected, this king's insignificant. Herod's a tin-pot dictator who, for all the power he thought he wielded, was a pathetic excuse for a man, as dictators always are. He will be responsible for the arrest, the torture, and the execution of Jesus. He thinks he rules with power, but in reality he's a slave to the politics of power. And with these words, go tell that fox, Jesus is revealing his attitude toward Herod, and it's one of contempt. Contempt in the sense of disregard and derision. The best way to view Jesus' emotion toward Herod is through the lens of Psalm 2 in the Old Testament, where we read these words, why do the heathens rage in the people's plot in vain? The kings of the earth, Herod included, set themselves and the rulers take counsel together against the Lord and against his anointed Jesus.

This is a perfect description of Herod's attitude to Jesus. He is plotting against Jesus to try and rid himself of Jesus' lordship over him. But now comes God's attitude to Herod, as revealed in Psalm 2.

He who sits in the heavens laughs. The Lord holds them all in derision or contempt. The God who sits on the throne of universal sovereignty, laughs at the political power games of tin pot rulers like headed to God, it's like toddlers and a nursery arguing over whose toy it is. He makes them the subjects of a bad poem. A sly man was headed but altogether worthless, and God laughs at him. [6 : 25] For Jesus to say, go tell that fox, is Jesus acting in a Psalm 2 godlike way toward Herod?

For all that Herod thinks he rules in Israel, he's got no more power than a toddler in a nursery. He is the worst kind of self-deceived fool, and Jesus knows it. A type A man with the mind of a bern. At this stage, Jesus is healing the sick and releasing the demon-possessed from their torments. To these people, to Jesus rather, these needy people are of more significance than Herod. Jesus has got more important things to do than indulge Herod's political fantasies. He's got the business of loving the suffering and outcast to get on with.

You know, we live in a world dominated by powerful men in politics. Think of the influencers of our day, the great influencers. To God, they're worth as much as a grain of sand on the seashore. [7 : 40] Remember, they're not real men. They're not real men. They are worthless. God is more interested in the suffering and the needy, the troubled nobodies who make up the vast majority of humanity. It's really not so surprising that not many wise or powerful men are members of His church. Do we really suppose that the God of heaven and earth is impressed by our worldly titles and status? The emotion of Jesus here is precisely in line with the attitude of God toward powerful men in this world, contempt and derision.

Let me apply this directly into our situation. It is often thought that the best evangelistic strategy the church can engage in is to influence the influencers, to invest our evangelistic energies into targeting the rich, influential, and powerful. This type of evangelism even has a name. It's called trickle-down evangelism. Ever heard that name? Trickle-down evangelism. It is the most prominent evangelistic strategy in the Reformed church today. And it manifests itself in planting student churches, thinking that the students of today will be the influencers of tomorrow. But trickle-down evangelism is not Christ-like, biblical, or effective. On a Sunday evening during their student years, the great Scottish evangelists Robert Mary McShane and Andrew Boner, rather than attending dinner parties with the great and good of Edinburgh society, went into the slums of the old city and met the needs of the poor and sick and preached the gospel to drunks and prostitutes. That is real evangelism in a biblical, masculine, Christ-like way. And we must seek to do the same here in Crow Road, to treat people as people and love them as they are, not to be influenced by their worldly status or the influence they may have over others. [10 : 15] For if we are to follow the emotions and masculinity of Jesus, serving the least in our society is our call and mission, while fawning over the rich and powerful is just pathetic.

Contempt. Second attitude of Jesus. Confidence. Confidence in the second part of verse 32 and 33. Even at this late stage in Jesus' public ministry, as the suffering and death is drawing ever nearer, Jesus is healing the sick, casting out demons. Though He's facing inhumane suffering, He is relieving the suffering of the needy. He says, Behold, I cast out demons and perform cures today and tomorrow, and the third day I finish my course.

In other words, for that day and the next day, Jesus is going to continue to perform the works of the kingdom in relieving suffering. He's going to continue to do all these miracles and speak His Word. He confirms that in verse 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. When Jesus speaks of going on His way, He means, I have no intention of stopping my works of mercy, just because Herod tells me to.

On the third day, I will move away from the region I'm currently in and will continue on my journey to Jerusalem, but I'm not going to have my movements controlled by Herod. I'll be here for the next two days, relieving the suffering of the needy. Jesus will not dance to anyone else's tune other than that of His heavenly Father. He knows that He must go to Jerusalem. I must, He says in verse 33, and He knows that when He gets there, He will be executed. He's no coward such that He's afraid of the threats of Herod. He's not going to turn away from the death He must die for our sins. It's just that He wants to follow His Father's will and willingly die at a time and place of His own choosing, Jerusalem. What Jesus is revealing in this verse is His confidence in His Father's plan for His life and death. No matter should a legion of Roman soldiers block His way, Jesus knows that God's will is for Him to reach Jerusalem and die on the cross for the sins of the world. No matter that Satan should do everything in His power to stop Him, Jesus is confident that His Father's will is supreme.

[13:02] It's a beautiful childlike confidence, what we call faith, that Jesus, rather than being intimidated by the threats of this world's powerful people, trusts that His heavenly Father will guide His steps and protect Him until the appointed time. I love Psalm 31 verse 15 where King David, in the midst of great trouble in his own personal life, shows a similar confidence in God. He says of God, my times are in your hands. That's real masculinity. Childlike confidence in God.

The great English evangelist George Whitefield once said, we are immortal till our work is done. We are immortal till our work is done. If God still has work for us to do on this earth, nothing can get in the way of it. The early Christian church was persecuted by the Jewish leaders and the Romans. They had much of which to be afraid. And yet by displaying His confidence, Jesus is encouraging them to be confident also. Herod's not in control of their lives. Neither is Caesar. Their loving heavenly Father is in control of their lives, and they can trust Him with their lives. As Whitefield said, they were immortal until their work was done.

In the same way for us today, the fear we may experience at the thought of what may or may not happen to us in the future is taken away when we realize that the great leaders of this world aren't in control of our lives or the destiny of God's church. Nor are the great philosophies of this world so antagonistic to Christianity. Our heavenly Father is in control of all things, and we as a church and as individuals are immortal until our work is done.

Our times are in the hand of the Father who loves us and sent His Son to die for us. We can experience that childlike confidence in our heavenly Father, just like Jesus did in this passage. Confidence. Okay, third emotion of Jesus. Anguish in verse 34. Anguish. This passage is most famous for Jesus' great emotional lament over the city of Jerusalem. Now, bear in mind that Jerusalem had been the capital city of King David's great empire and the center of God's presence on earth. The city God loved, the city in which He was worshipped. But now Jesus says of it, O Jerusalem, Jerusalem, the city that kills the prophets and stones those who were sent to it, how often would I have gathered your children together as a hen gathers her brood under her wings? And you were not willing. Behold, your house is forsaken.

When I was a kid on a Saturday afternoon, the football scores would be read out, you know, far, far, far, east, five, five. Do you really reckon that Jesus speaks these words with as little emotion as a sports reporter reads out the football scores? I would suggest rather that Jesus' heart was breaking within them as he referred to the story of Jerusalem's continual rejection. Read the Old Testament. Count the number of Old Testament prophets violently rejected by Israel's leadership. See them being stoned. See them being hanged. See them being sawn in two. Hear their cries as they're executed by the Herod's of the Old Testament. Time and time again, God sent prophets to call His people to return to Him.

[17:19] But rather than listen, they killed His messengers. And every time a prophet came to them, it was as if God was reaching out to gather His beloved children to Himself as a hen gathers her brood under its wings.

He calls them to return to Him. He calls them to return to Him and experience for themselves His love and His presence and protection. But they weren't willing. Notice here that Jesus is positioning Himself as the God of the Old Testament. It was me who sent Isaiah to you. It was me who sent Ezekiel to you. It was me who sent Jeremiah to you. How often were they sent, He says?

He sent them all these prophets, but they stoned them and they killed them. And all the time, it was with the tenderness of a mother hen who wanted her chicks to hide under her wings, but they were not willing.

But now Jesus Himself comes. The sender becomes the saint. By the message Jesus has received of telling him of Herod's murderous intention, He now knows that Jerusalem hasn't changed one bit. The same Jerusalem which killed the prophets and stoned those sent to it will crucify its Lord and King, Jesus. The same Son of David who founded the city, the Son of God whose city it was. It's not willing to have Him, so it'll kill Him. Such an attitude dooms them to destruction. Your house is forsaken, Jesus says, and I'm sure He says it with a broken heart.

Jerusalem means city of peace, but its rulers will deface it with the blood of Jesus. See the anguish of Jesus in His face. Hear it in His words. He is pained by Jerusalem's stubbornness.

[19:28] He's filled with anguish by its unwillingness. He's deeply saddened by the prospect of its doom. He loved it so, the city of His father David, the city of His God, but it's not willing to receive that love. It throws God's love back in Jesus' face with its petty politics and its unrighteous power games.

See how a real man expresses the emotion of anguish and grief. There's no vindictiveness here. There's just deep sadness, and He's hiding it from no one.

The pain is etched in His face because it's written deep in His heart. The Jerusalem He loved so much will arrest Him and torture Him and crucify Him and execute Him. When the Lord comes to them, the people of Jerusalem will cry out, crucify Him, crucify Him.

We live in a society marked by its rejection of Christianity, a society moving further and further away from the liberating beauty of the gospel. It is hard to bear the despising tone of the media toward us. It is even harder when our friends and family turn against us on account of our faith in Jesus. But what is to be our response to this? Is it not to follow in Jesus' footsteps, and rather than getting angry, to express our anguish to God in prayer, to prayerfully grieve over a society which is not willing to hear the loving invitations of God, knowing that eventually our society's rejection will lead to its destruction?

[21 : 12] But also here, there's a real challenge to those of us who are not yet Christians. Why have we not yet responded to the gracious invitations of the gospel? Even today, through the preaching of His Word, Jesus is calling us to hide under His wings and experience His love and grace for ourselves.

Shall He say of us what He said of Jerusalem all those years ago? That you were not willing. You were not willing. Shall our Lord grieve over us because ultimately we rejected Him and His love? The fourth and last masculine emotion Jesus displays in this passage is hope. Hope. The words of verse 35 have been the subject of controversy for centuries.

What does Jesus mean by saying, You will not see me again until you say, Blessed is he who comes in the name of the Lord. Some think this is a reference to the triumphal entry of Jesus into Jerusalem, which we read of later on in Luke's gospel.

At that time, people will call out to Jesus as He enters Jerusalem riding in a colt. They'll call out, Hosanna! Blessed is he who comes in the name of the Lord. But it was not the people of Jerusalem who called out to Jesus.

[22 : 39] It was pilgrims from Galilee who called out to Him that day. So, Jesus saying here is probably not a reference to the triumphal entry.

I want to suggest to you that it's a reference to something that is yet to happen in the history of our world, but one which is the subject of many Bible prophecies.

Something you won't hear very often from a pulpit. Before, during, and since the days of Jesus, Jewish people, by and large, have rejected Jesus as the Messiah.

They stoned the prophets of Jesus in the Old Testament. They crucified Jesus when He came, and still they reject Him. Generally speaking, Jewish people are some of the hardest people in the world toward the gospel of Jesus Christ.

There are many exceptions, but they are just that, exceptions. Still, the message of Jesus encounters the same reaction from Jewish people as it did 2,000 years ago in Jerusalem.

[23 : 49] They say, crucify Him, crucify Him. We want nothing to do with that man. But a Reformed understanding of the future understands the Bible to predict a time is coming when Jewish people en masse will turn to Jesus Christ as Lord and Savior.

En masse. That understanding from the Bible drove the great Scottish evangelist, Robert Murray McShane and Andrew Boner, who we've already spoken about, to have a passion for reaching out to Jewish people with the gospel.

It drove the Free Church of Scotland to become prime members of Christian Witness to Israel, today's international mission to Jewish people. It's not about the nation-state of Israel, which is very questionable.

It's about God's purposes for Jewish people, whatever they are in the world. God cast them off for their rejection of Jesus, but their casting off is temporary, and according to the Bible, a time is coming when Jewish people, en masse, will turn to Jesus as Messiah.

They will do what they should have done during Jesus' public ministry. They will bow before Him as Lord and believe in Him as Savior. They will look to the cross on which they crucified Him.

[25 : 13] They will mourn for their sin, but in Jesus they will put their trust. This is a Reformed historical understanding of the prophecies of the whole Bible, especially those contained in Romans 9 through 11.

Jesus, Jesus by saying, you will not see me again until you say, blessed is he who comes in the name of the Lord, is looking forward to that time when Jewish people will return en masse to Him, and rather than crucify Him, worship Him as Lord.

He is expressing the emotion of hope. His belief in God's promise that though the Jews will soon kill Him, the time will come when God will turn their hearts to Him again, and they will believe.

It's hope, not uncertain, but sure. Hope for His people, burning in His holy heart. Surely Jesus' hope here calls us to be interested in Jewish mission.

What drove the great Scottish evangelists to be so passionate about Jewish evangelism is that they thought they could accelerate the second coming of Jesus by pressing home the gospel to Jewish people.

[26 : 31] The first minister of Milton Free Church, one of our ancestor churches, was John Duncan from Aberdeen, who was also known as Rabbi Duncan because of his passion for Jewish mission, and how through him many noted Jewish intellectuals came to a living faith in Jesus Christ.

The hope burning in Jesus' heart here for the conversion of His people was mirrored by the Apostle Paul in Romans chapter 9, who went as far as to say, I could wish that I myself would have cursed and cut off from Christ for the sake of my brothers, my kinsmen according to the flesh.

You know, it seems so strange today that Christians who worship the Jesus who was so passionate about Jewish people and read Paul, who would happily have given his life for their salvation, are so unconcerned for Jewish mission.

If you are not already, pray for the salvation of the Jews, whatever they are, and let your heart burn with the sure and certain hope of their return to the Messiah.

Jesus was a real man, not the strong, silent, stoic type we so often associate with masculinity. He was not a type A man.

[28 : 05] He responded with great compassion to the suffering. He treated the proud with contempt. He displayed deep anguish over the sad state of His people, and He relished the hope of their future salvation.

All this from a real man, a real man who would soon die on a real Roman cross to take away the sins of a real world, to take away the sins of the proud and the stubborn, the suffering and the downcast.

For men among us, be a real man. Let's not take our view of masculinity from Jason's statum, but from Jesus Christ.

Not from the history of the church, but from the Jesus of the Gospels. My final question concerns Jesus' anguish over those who were not willing to believe in Him.

Are you willing today? Are you? Amen.