

*At that time some Pharisees came to Jesus and said to him, "Leave this place and go somewhere else. Herod wants to kill you."*

<sup>32</sup> *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.'* <sup>33</sup> *In any case, I must keep going today and tomorrow and the next day—for surely no prophet can die outside Jerusalem!*

<sup>34</sup> *"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!"* <sup>35</sup> *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.'"* Luke 13:31-35

### What did Jesus Feel?

Which do you think are more powerful, ideas or feelings? As modern, educated people, I bet many of us would argue that ideas and reason are more powerful than feelings. But I'd have to disagree. Emotions make us act. If you can get someone to feel something – sympathy, outrage, love, hate, whatever – they're far more likely to do something than if you just convince them of an argument. In fact, it's often true that people act on their feelings and then they come up with an argument afterwards to justify what they said or did. Personally, I think that explains a great deal of what happens in Washington, when politicians directly contradict positions they had months or even weeks earlier. Someone they oppose says something like what they had said. Their dislike, bitterness, or anger drives them to say something that they themselves would've ridiculed at an earlier time. Emotions are powerful things. This morning, in our gospel lesson, Jesus' emotions are on display. While he never did anything sinful or even foolish because of his emotions, those feelings matter because they help us understand what he was doing and why. **What did Jesus feel?**

#### I.

Jesus' words today are packed with emotion. The first one we see is perhaps the most surprising, given the way we sometimes picture Jesus. He's defiant and even dismissive of an enemy. Why? **What did Jesus feel? Resolve toward those who wanted to stop him.**

When Jesus said these words, he was in Galilee, the northern part of Israel. He had grown up in Galilee and it was home for him. But it was ruled by a man named Herod Antipas. This was one of the sons of the Herod who had tried to kill Jesus when he was a baby. This Herod didn't rule the whole country like his father had. He ruled only this northern snippet. While Jesus was preaching and teaching there, some Pharisees came to him with a warning: **"Leave this place and go somewhere else. Herod wants to kill you."** Now, it's surprising that Pharisees would warn Jesus about this plan, since they wanted him dead as much as anybody. But it does seem clear from Jesus' answer that Herod's desire to kill him was real. Herod probably thought that Jesus was going to destabilize his region and certainly, Jesus' enemies would've encouraged that fear.

So how did Jesus respond? He said, **"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.'"** Now, the days aren't literal here. He was more than three days away from Jerusalem. So what did he mean? Today and tomorrow, he would drive out demons and heal people. Today and tomorrow meant the time that he had allotted for doing this work. Until he was ready, he was going to stay in Galilee and demonstrate that he was the Son of God. He was going to keep doing miracles to call the people of Galilee to repentance and faith in him.

Then "on the third day" – when the time was right – he would reach his goal. He would go to Jerusalem. But he would do that according to his timetable. Nothing Herod said or did was going to change that. Jesus called him a fox, which probably didn't imply being clever. It seems more likely that Jesus was dismissing him as a predator, but not a terribly dangerous one. He told these Pharisees to go back and tell Herod – the ruler – what he had said. Now, we don't know if they did that or not. But nothing was going to move Jesus off of his plan.

Herod wanted to kill him. That was the easiest way to get rid of potential trouble makers. And to all human observation, he had the power to do it. But Jesus had no intention of letting Herod get away with making even the slightest change in his plans, let alone get away with killing him. Now, we never see him

doing any great miracle to stop Herod, but we never see Herod make a move against him, either. Poor Herod just wasn't up to the task. Even though Jesus chose to work behind the scenes, Herod was challenging the Son of God. And nothing came of his threats.

Jesus kept to his plan for us. He knew exactly what needed to be done to save us – to save the entire world – from the sin that we are guilty of. The emotion that he showed when he defied Herod was based on his love for us. That love still stands today. In our day, I often fear that we will forget how powerful that work that Jesus did really was. I mean, these things happened two thousand years ago. There are so many things that to all human observation seem much more powerful. There are so many times when it might seem like talking about Jesus does no good at all. What does his dying and rising have to do with what's going on now?

But that's our human weakness talking. What Jesus did then has a direct bearing on everything that makes our lives difficult today. All that we suffer here is the direct result of sin poisoning God's world. Jesus came and he conquered that sin. He didn't let a man who should've held all the cards knock his plan off the tracks. Jesus defied Herod to show us his passion for us. And our inability to see how that has anything to do with our lives is really our sinful weakness coming out. But the Son of God stuck to his plan to pay for our weakness. He died because we are weak. He rose to make us strong. Because he rose, our sin and our weakness are wiped off of God's record. And God built into the message of his resurrection the very same power that ordered all the events of all the world so that Jesus could die and rise on God's schedule, and not on any man's. That power of God, built into the gospel, strengthens our hearts. That power preserves our faith for as long as we live here. Nothing can stop Jesus when he works for us!

## II.

So when Jesus finished his work in Galilee he would turn south. There, he would reach his goal: the cross. Do you see the irony? Herod wanted to kill him, but Jesus defied that petty tyrant. He would finish his work and then go to Jerusalem and be killed. When Jesus' thoughts turned to that coming execution, his mood changed. When he thought of the people of Jerusalem and the part they would play in his death, **what did Jesus feel? Sadness over those who would kill him.**

Imagine that someone you knew was going to kill you, or at least try. How would you feel about that person? I doubt that sadness over that person's punishment would be the first thing to spring to mind. But that is what Jesus felt for the city and the people of Jerusalem. He said, **“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!”** There's no mistaking the depth of Jesus' feeling there.

What did Jesus want for Jerusalem? The same thing that he wanted for all of the Jewish people, indeed, for all people everywhere. Jesus wanted them to have eternal life. That image of a hen gathering her chicks under her wings illustrates his love for them. Most of us weren't raised on a farm, but even so, we understand that a hen is a mother. Her tenderness as she gathers those babies and protects them is an image we can easily identify with. That love was Jesus' love. He knew that the people of Jerusalem would play a part in sending him to the cross, but still he wanted to gather them in.

And his love was totally disappointed. The people of Jerusalem didn't want it. Oh it seemed like they did sometimes. Jesus would march into the city on Palm Sunday and the crowds would welcome him with cries of “Hosanna to the Son of David!” But in less than a week, they would cry out, “Crucify him! Crucify him!” On the way out to the cross, the women of Jerusalem would turn out to weep for him. But to those women, he repeated these exact words because their love was based on sentiment and on false hopes rather than on faith in the Son of God who came to save them.

The people of Jerusalem participated in the death of Christ. That might seem a little unfair, since Pontius Pilate ordered the execution and Roman soldiers carried it out and the leaders of the Jews were egging Pilate on. But remember that Pilate made one last ditch effort to save Jesus. He appealed to the crowds in Jerusalem and that's when they cried out, “Crucify him!” Pilate gave them what they asked for.

Jesus knew that all that was going to happen. And as he reflected on it, his mood changed one more time. You can almost hear his voice hardening as 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.’”** He wasn't talking about Palm Sunday when he said this. He was talking about Judgment Day. After 1500 years of God caring for his chosen people, their house was left to them desolate. They had walked away from God for

the last time. God would now create a new nation, a new Israel – the Christian Church. The old Israel would finally face his judgment. On Judgment Day, those enemies who cried out, “Crucify him!”; those leaders who egged Pilate on and convinced the crowd; those Romans who ordered the execution and made it happen; all of them and all the rest of Jesus’ enemies of every age will have to praise him and then go to hell.

It’s not an image that we’re terribly comfortable with, but Jesus will harden his voice against them and send them there. And understand, my friends, that we are no better than they are. One of the great temptations whenever we hear about the unfaithfulness of Israel is to pat ourselves on the back and whisper to ourselves, “I’m glad I’m not one of them.” But that very pride is the sin that led them away from Jesus. The Jews banked on being the people of God. They loved to look down on people who did not have what they had. They loved to feel superior, to feel blessed, to feel chosen.

We are the New Testament people of God and we are blessed. We are even chosen – God chose us before the world began. But smugness and pride are the enemy of our faith. When we love to feel superior we’re on the road that leads away from Jesus. What a tragedy it would be if Christ ever had to weep for us as he wept for the city of Jerusalem! Make no mistake, my friends, if Jesus was willing to condemn them to hell, he is willing to condemn us as well. The more pride festers in our hearts, the greater the danger to our faith. God will never stop loving us. But we can walk away from his love and die under his judgment.

Could we ever cause the Lord to weep for us and then send us to hell? We are sinners. And every day, the sinner in our hearts schemes against the believer God has put there. Every day, the devil works to lead us away from God. Every day, our unbelieving society tries to coax us over to its side, where we worship at the altar of self-esteem and self-love. We can abandon our faith and worship ourselves. It has happened before and it will happen again. The sad thing is that, left to ourselves, that’s always what we sinners would do.

But we are not left to ourselves. Jesus died, at just the right moment, to pay for the pride and the sin in our hearts. Jesus died, in Jerusalem, the capital of his people and the site of his temple, because we sinners always want to worship ourselves. He died and he paid for all that sin. On the third day, he rose and he took that sin away. Now he comes to us in the message of eternal life and he has renewed our hearts. The key to staying with him, the key to fighting against the pride that we were born with, the key to defeating the devil and the unbelieving world and trusting in Christ until we reach heaven, is the message about Christ. He died and he rose. We know that we needed that. We know that he did it. When we hear about it, his power flows to us. In communion, in the word, in confession and forgiveness, the power of Christ enters our hearts and keeps us in the one, truth faith.

Jesus, who would not be denied, is behind that power. Jesus, whose love extends even to those who reject him, loves us. He works to keep us in the faith. He works for you and for me. All that he felt on that day drove him to finish that mission. Because he did, all that we feel has changed. We have peace with God. May God keep us in the faith. Amen.