

**Albany Presbyterian Church**  
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Many of us have become almost too afraid to read newspapers in recent years. The chaos around us and the violence depicted in the media can be very traumatic. Every day, we are surprised with yet another and wonder how we can make sense of our world and where God is in all this.

Luke 13 begins with people approaching Jesus to share the news of the day. At that time, Pilate, the governor of Judea, had Galileans killed, and their blood was offered in the temple. The second piece of news was that some people died when the tower of Siloam collapsed on them. People came to Jesus wanting to know how to make sense of everything happening around them. And Jesus began teaching them about the end times and the Kingdom of God that Jesus came to establish. And there were the parables: the parable of the fig tree, the parable of mustard seeds and yeast, and the parable of the narrow door. All the while, Jesus continued to meet and heal those who were sick and who struggled mentally with the torment of demonic power.

In Luke 13: 31-35, Jesus began talking about his mission—the purpose of his life and ministry—and the context of his work within God's history and God's ongoing plan for the redemption of the world.

Like in the beginning, some people, this time the Pharisees, came to Jesus to tell him that Herod the king of Judah was after his life. The same Herod who had John the Baptist killed.

First, we're uncertain about what was behind this: whether the Pharisees genuinely cared about Jesus and his safety or wanted him to move on. Some Pharisees were kind to Jesus, even inviting him to eat with them in Luke 7:36, and like Nicodemus, approached Jesus seeking wisdom. But some other Pharisees found Jesus the enemy of the law, looking to get rid of him, delivering Jesus to the authority to be killed.

Secondly, regardless of their motivation, Jesus did not appear surprised or deterred by their warning. Instead, Jesus said... "Go tell that fox." He assured them that he would fulfill his purpose despite the threats of this world, including King Herod.

It's interesting to examine Herod and Pilate's relationship. In Luke 23:12, we learn they were enemies—the king and the governor—but became friends when they both became involved in Jesus's death.

Herod was the king of Judah, a title granted by the Roman Empire. Pilate was the governor appointed by the Roman Empire. Many commentators suggest that the incident in which Pilate killed the Galileans and desecrated the temple was meant to assert his authority over Herod and undermine his power.

What Jesus says here clearly reflects his state of mind: his determination that nothing and no one can prevent him from achieving his divine purpose.

Third, the purpose of Jesus' life and ministry is articulated in verse 32: "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, tomorrow, and the next day." This statement effectively encapsulates the purpose of Jesus' ministry. First, He mentions driving out demons, signifying that His ministry fundamentally is to struggle against evil to establish God's kingdom of goodness and love. And then, He speaks of healing people, reflecting the passage from Isaiah that Luke includes in Jesus' first sermon in the synagogue in Nazareth, found in Luke 4:18-19, **to set the captives free and to recover sight for the blind, and again establish the Kingdom of God.** "Today and tomorrow" means until the last day. Jesus says He finishes His work on the third day, which implies His death and resurrection.

Reflecting on these in today's context, we see how our world parallels this story; we have our own Herod and Pilates in our world. We also have our need to resist evil and heal the broken and hurt. Maybe God is inviting us to be inspired by Jesus's journey with him, undeterred of whatever gets in our way of following Jesus and be courageous against all that threatens us. As Jesus was clear on his mission and continued to do what he came to do, we also need to continue to work in this mission of Jesus to bring goodness against evil and to bring healing and comfort to those who are broken and hurt. So that God's kingdom is firmly established in our lives and the world.

And that as David said in Psalm 27, we have confidence in God as our light, salvation, and strength. We seek God's presence and protection even in the face of adversity, trusting that God will protect us in times of trouble and lift us above our enemies.

But then, in verse 34, Jesus cries out toward Jerusalem, where his mission will end. "O Jerusalem, Jerusalem..." Looking toward Jerusalem, not with fear but with deep sadness, Jesus sings this song of lament. In Jerusalem, God established His temple; the people of God saw that as His dwelling place. This is where the people worship God to this day. Yet, it was also a place of tragedy, marked by extreme violence against God and His prophets. Jesus's death and resurrection reflect this.

So Jesus expresses his lament, alternating between denunciation and compassion. "Jerusalem, Jerusalem, you who kill the prophets and stone those sent to you!" The denunciation follows: "Look, your house is left to you desolate." Taken literally, this may refer to the temple's destruction in A.D. 70. Jesus also declares, "I tell you; you will not see me again" — a denouncement. Yet, his compassion shines through when he says, "How often I have longed to gather your children together as a hen gathers her chicks under her wings, yet you were not willing." Yet. Compassion... You will not see me again until you say, 'Blessed is he who comes in the name of the Lord.'" This reminds us of Palm Sunday, when people welcomed him with palm branches as he entered Jerusalem.

Luke tells us that Jesus was aware of the growing danger around him. He was not free from the concerns and anxieties of the world, especially knowing that his final day would be spent on the cross crucified and died. He had the courage and strength to persist in his mission to establish his Kingdom here. Above all, Jesus showed us what is at God's heart: the compassion and unchanging desire to protect us like a hen gathering her chicks under her wings.

It is true. It may be much easier not to know what is happening today. We experience compassion fatigue, which can lead to apathy and indifference. Some people suggest we should avoid politics and discussing divisive and controversial events. There should be a separation between religion and the state.

So, how do we interpret this passage in our lives today? What frightens us about continuing our mission to bring the kingdom of God here and now, to heal, and cast out evil? And how do we view our world, our Jerusalem? How does Jesus lament for our Jerusalem?

In 1806, the poet William Blake wrote a poem called Jerusalem, which became a popular song and its anthem, reflected on the reality of his Jerusalem—his country, England. He lamented for England, his Jerusalem, denouncing the dark Satanic Mills and the industrialization that was destroying the environment and the lives of its people. Blake commits to building the City of God in his homeland and doing everything possible to see the establishment of God's reign, the Jerusalem.

Maybe... Luke reminds us that our call to journey in this season of Lent also includes praying for our world, land, church, and Jerusalem. And in praying for our own Jerusalem, we must also repent together for how we treat one another, for the fear we harbor toward each other, for our failure to love as God loves us, and for the desolation and broken trust in our relationships. We repent personally and together as his church for straying from our purpose as Christians: following Jesus' example, resisting evil, and bringing healing.

Pray for the world's present trials and tribulations, pray that evil be cast out. God pours out his compassion and mercy so that all people here and everywhere may surrender to our God, who loves us. And most of all. Let us pray for the day when we see our Savior coming, when we sing, "Blessed is he who comes in the name of the Lord."