

*Grace to you and peace from God our Father and the Lord Jesus Christ. Amen.*

Earlier in the Gospel of Luke we hear Jesus foretelling of His death and resurrection to his disciples:

<sup>22</sup> ...“The Son of Man must undergo great suffering, and be rejected by the elders, chief priests, and scribes, and be killed, and on the third day be raised.” (Luke 9:22)

These fateful words show us that Jesus will not be killed by Herod as we hear the Pharisees warning Jesus today in our appointed Gospel text, rather he will journey on to Jerusalem where he will meet his fate and be killed as the prophets had been killed before him. Here in these fateful words, Jesus Christ is saying to the disciples and everyone else that he will not be dissuaded from God’s mission to bring forgiveness and salvation to all through his death...according to today’s Gospel lesson, and all of this will happen in Jerusalem. Listen again to Jesus responding to the Pharisees attempting to warn Him:

<sup>32b</sup> "Go and tell that fox for me, (*Herod*), 'Listen, I am casting out demons and performing cures today and tomorrow, and on the third day I finish my work. <sup>33</sup> Yet today, tomorrow, and the next day I must be on my way, because it is impossible for a prophet to be killed outside of Jerusalem.' <sup>34</sup> Jerusalem, Jerusalem, the city that kills the prophets and stones those who are sent to it! How often have I desired to gather your children together as a hen gathers her brood under her wings, and you were not willing! (Luke 9:32b-34)

There is a conflicting symbolic nature to our Gospel today that sees Herod as a sly and cunning fox under the protective watchful eyes of the Pharisees and Jerusalem as the place that kills the prophets. The Pharisees seem to be protective of Jesus by warning him about Herod, but are they really? Or are they simply attempting to derail Jesus by having him reject God’s mission that he is carrying out? Likewise, Jerusalem is seen as a holy city but Jesus sees Jerusalem for who she truly is, the city that kills the prophets. But according to the Pharisees, Sadducees, Rome, and the people in that city, Jerusalem is seen as a holy city and a symbol of peace and a place of God’s dwelling.

Jerusalem at that time was considered the center of the world...a place where God’s finger touched the wild, chaotic world and held it still. The temple in Jerusalem symbolized the covenant between God and his people.<sup>1</sup> The city’s name literally means “possession of peace” or “foundation of peace” and its name occurs over 800 times in the Bible.

The Pharisees have traditionally opposed Jesus and now they seem protective of Jesus. Jerusalem, according to Jesus is the place that kills the prophets but according to the culture, it is the place where God will touch the world and protect us all.

Ironically, the passion prediction Jesus makes to his disciples about undergoing great suffering, being rejected by the elders, chief priests, and scribes, and then killed, seems to contradict the meaning of Jerusalem. Or it seems to beg the question, why would Jerusalem stone and kill all that God sends to her? But Jesus is not traveling to Jerusalem to escape death or to be protected

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As typical of Luke's Christology, these questions being raised by the conflicting understandings and symbolism show us the bigger picture of who Jesus is and what Jesus is teaching us. Jesus desires to gather the people of Jerusalem under his protective care, rather he desires to show them God's protective care. But the human dimension of Jerusalem already sees themselves as holy or Godly people. They don't want a suffering god, or a god that will be killed. They want their conceived god to kill the prophets who warned of the temple's doom. They want a god who can put to death anyone who will challenge their self-perception, their power, their prestige, and their political might. And in this mindset, Jerusalem sees herself as "the people of God."<sup>2</sup>

In order to unpack what Jerusalem represents; I want to look at our Epistle reading this week and then return to our Gospel last week where Jesus was in the wilderness and tempted by the devil. The devil seductively offered Jesus very earthly things, things that are extremely alluring and very enticing...things like power and glory, and even a hint of wealth can be heard in all that he is tempted with. Like the Pharisees today, the devil is attempting to turn Jesus away from his purpose, turn him away from the cross...turn him away from his faith and trust in God...move him away from the shelter of God...or we can say, move him into Jerusalem. Just like the many things in our lives that destroy our faith...things such as a faith in a god who destroys and condemns all that we dislike, a god who serves us, or a god that we demand to shower us with wealth, with glory and with honor when we do what we assume to be righteous. This is what St. Paul is lifting up today in his letter to the saints in Philippi. Paul writes:

<sup>18</sup> For many live as enemies of the cross of Christ; I have often told you of them, and now I tell you even with tears. <sup>19</sup> Their end is destruction; their god is the belly; and their glory is in their shame; their minds are set on earthly things. <sup>20</sup> But our citizenship is in heaven, and it is from there that we are expecting a Savior, the Lord Jesus Christ. (Phil 3:18-20)

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"<sup>9</sup> Then the devil took him to Jerusalem, and placed him on the pinnacle of the temple, saying to him, "If you are the Son of God, throw yourself down from here, <sup>10</sup> for it is written, 'He will command his angels concerning you, to protect you,' <sup>11</sup> and 'On their hands they will bear you up, so that you will not dash your foot against a stone.'" (Luke 4:9-10)

What we heard in this temptation story last week is what we hear once again this week from St. Paul. In these lessons we see how we turn to the self, we turn to the things that feed us, the things that please us, and the things that give us power over something or someone and we turn away from God by claiming to be "good Christian people." And this is what Jerusalem represents today in our Gospel lesson.

We, like Jerusalem, want a God that is like us...we don't want a suffering god, we don't want a god who simply walks away from the devil, we want a god who will take our side and put to death anyone or anything that challenges our notion of faith, our power, our prestige, or our political might and this is exactly what Jerusalem has come to. Jerusalem is a religion that is centered on itself rather than a Messiah who like a mother hen will protect us all by sheading his blood for us, to feed us, and to protect us from the bondage of the self.

Today we are shown that our reliance is on the things that serve ourselves. Here today in this exchange between the Pharisee and Jesus, they attempt to dissuade Jesus according to their human dimension or their human perspective that they assume will turn Jesus away from God's mission. However, like last week, Jesus remains true to the trust and hope of God. Jesus shows us that he does not turn toward his own gain or trust his own belly or glory, he shows us that his trust does not lie in the political rulers like Pharisees, rather his trust, his faith, and his hope remains in God the Father.

And as Jesus journeys to the cross he heads into the city of Jerusalem and the people who rejected all that God has previously sent to them. Jerusalem is that place for those who think of themselves as "people of God" but are actually a people who reject God's purpose for their lives and turn to their own ways and means and reject the hope and promise of God...Jesus refers to this when he laments:

<sup>34</sup> Jerusalem, Jerusalem, the city that kills the prophets and stones those who are sent to it!  
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Even knowing this...who among us, from our human perspective or dimension wouldn't fail in these situations? But this is why Jesus is sent to Jerusalem in the first place...because we do fail, we fall short, simply put...we sin, but Jesus does not he abides in the hope of God. The trust and faith of Jesus turns to the hope and salvation in God and this is what he desires to give to us all in the city of Jerusalem and it is what he gives to each of us in our metaphorical Jerusalem.

Call it the wilderness or Jerusalem...call it corruption or complacency these are the very forces that turn us away from God...they are at work in the times we are challenged, tempted, or when we are confronted and we trust that *our* power, *our* political might, and *our* self-righteousness will bring us glory and that our forgiveness and salvation comes from the perception of ourselves as good Christians. As we hide in our Jerusalem and rely on and trust in ourselves it simply causes us to abandon our trust and faith in God but this is where we find Christ gathering us to shelter us

from those forces that devour our faith...the forces that would compel us to abandon God or live in alienation from God. The very Son of God who has remained true to his faith has made Jerusalem NOT a place of conflict and death but a place of victory over that conflict...a victory over death. Jerusalem, Jerusalem that place that kills the prophet and challenges our faith has become a place of victory...for God has gathered us under the wing of His only Son and by his very blood, God protects and feeds our faith in the day of our troubles. May Jesus continue to be our shelter and a dwelling of hope and salvation for us all...

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We, like Jerusalem, want a God that is like us...we don't want a suffering god, we don't want a god who simply walks away from the devil, we want a god who will take our side and put to death anyone or anything that challenges our notion of faith, our power, our prestige, or our political might and this is exactly what Jerusalem has come to. Jerusalem is a religion that is centered on itself rather than a Messiah who like a mother hen will protect us all by sheading his blood for us, to feed us, and to protect us from the bondage of the self.

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Call it the wilderness or Jerusalem...call it corruption or complacency these are the very forces that turn us away from God...they are at work in the times we are challenged, tempted, or when we are confronted and we trust that *our* power, *our* political might, and *our* self-righteousness will bring us glory and that our forgiveness and salvation comes from the perception of ourselves as good Christians. As we hide in our Jerusalem and rely on and trust in ourselves it simply causes us to abandon our trust and faith in God but this is where we find Christ gathering us to shelter us

from those forces that devour our faith...the forces that would compel us to abandon God or live in alienation from God. The very Son of God who has remained true to his faith has made Jerusalem NOT a place of conflict and death but a place of victory over that conflict...a victory over death. Jerusalem, Jerusalem that place that kills the prophet and challenges our faith has become a place of victory...for God has gathered us under the wing of His only Son and by his very blood, God protects and feeds our faith in the day of our troubles. May Jesus continue to be our shelter and a dwelling of hope and salvation for us all...

*In the name of the Father, and of the Son, and of the Holy Spirit.  
Amen*

*Grace to you and peace from God our Father and the Lord Jesus Christ. Amen.*

Earlier in the Gospel of Luke we hear Jesus foretelling of His death and resurrection to his disciples:

<sup>22</sup> ...“The Son of Man must undergo great suffering, and be rejected by the elders, chief priests, and scribes, and be killed, and on the third day be raised.” (Luke 9:22)

These fateful words show us that Jesus will not be killed by Herod as we hear the Pharisees warning Jesus today in our appointed Gospel text, rather he will journey on to Jerusalem where he will meet his fate and be killed as the prophets had been killed before him. Here in these fateful words, Jesus Christ is saying to the disciples and everyone else that he will not be dissuaded from God’s mission to bring forgiveness and salvation to all through his death...according to today’s Gospel lesson, and all of this will happen in Jerusalem. Listen again to Jesus responding to the Pharisees attempting to warn Him:

<sup>32b</sup> "Go and tell that fox for me, (*Herod*), 'Listen, I am casting out demons and performing cures today and tomorrow, and on the third day I finish my work. <sup>33</sup> Yet today, tomorrow, and the next day I must be on my way, because it is impossible for a prophet to be killed outside of Jerusalem.' <sup>34</sup> Jerusalem, Jerusalem, the city that kills the prophets and stones those who are sent to it! How often have I desired to gather your children together as a hen gathers her brood under her wings, and you were not willing! (Luke 9:32b-34)

There is a conflicting symbolic nature to our Gospel today that sees Herod as a sly and cunning fox under the protective watchful eyes of the Pharisees and Jerusalem as the place that kills the prophets. The Pharisees seem to be protective of Jesus by warning him about Herod, but are they really? Or are they simply attempting to derail Jesus by having him reject God’s mission that he is carrying out? Likewise, Jerusalem is seen as a holy city but Jesus sees Jerusalem for who she truly is, the city that kills the prophets. But according to the Pharisees, Sadducees, Rome, and the people in that city, Jerusalem is seen as a holy city and a symbol of peace and a place of God’s dwelling.

Jerusalem at that time was considered the center of the world...a place where God’s finger touched the wild, chaotic world and held it still. The temple in Jerusalem symbolized the covenant between God and his people.<sup>1</sup> The city’s name literally means “possession of peace” or “foundation of peace” and its name occurs over 800 times in the Bible.

The Pharisees have traditionally opposed Jesus and now they seem protective of Jesus. Jerusalem, according to Jesus is the place that kills the prophets but according to the culture, it is the place where God will touch the world and protect us all.

Ironically, the passion prediction Jesus makes to his disciples about undergoing great suffering, being rejected by the elders, chief priests, and scribes, and then killed, seems to contradict the meaning of Jerusalem. Or it seems to beg the question, why would Jerusalem stone and kill all that God sends to her? But Jesus is not traveling to Jerusalem to escape death or to be protected

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<sup>1</sup>Working Preacher, commentary for the Second Sunday of Lent, by Richard W. Swanson is Professor of Religion (Emeritus) at Augustana University. <https://www.workingpreacher.org/commentaries/revise-common-lectionary/second-sunday-in-lent-3/commentary-on-luke-1331-35-6>

from Herod, he is going there to die...a death that will not be controlled by Herod nor by the cunning Pharisees, but by his faithfulness to God's redemptive purposes. So, what does this mean? What are we to make of this deception and conflicting symbolism? If Jerusalem is a holy city and a symbol of peace and a place of God's dwelling, why are people being stoned and prophets being killed there? Why does Jesus want to gather the people of Jerusalem together under his wings instead of condemning the folks that stones and kills prophets?

As typical of Luke's Christology, these questions being raised by the conflicting understandings and symbolism show us the bigger picture of who Jesus is and what Jesus is teaching us. Jesus desires to gather the people of Jerusalem under his protective care, rather he desires to show them God's protective care. But the human dimension of Jerusalem already sees themselves as holy or Godly people. They don't want a suffering god, or a god that will be killed. They want their conceived god to kill the prophets who warned of the temple's doom. They want a god who can put to death anyone who will challenge their self-perception, their power, their prestige, and their political might. And in this mindset, Jerusalem sees herself as "the people of God."<sup>2</sup>

In order to unpack what Jerusalem represents; I want to look at our Epistle reading this week and then return to our Gospel last week where Jesus was in the wilderness and tempted by the devil. The devil seductively offered Jesus very earthly things, things that are extremely alluring and very enticing...things like power and glory, and even a hint of wealth can be heard in all that he is tempted with. Like the Pharisees today, the devil is attempting to turn Jesus away from his purpose, turn him away from the cross...turn him away from his faith and trust in God...move him away from the shelter of God...or we can say, move him into Jerusalem. Just like the many things in our lives that destroy our faith...things such as a faith in a god who destroys and condemns all that we dislike, a god who serves us, or a god that we demand to shower us with wealth, with glory and with honor when we do what we assume to be righteous. This is what St. Paul is lifting up today in his letter to the saints in Philippi. Paul writes:

<sup>18</sup> For many live as enemies of the cross of Christ; I have often told you of them, and now I tell you even with tears. <sup>19</sup> Their end is destruction; their god is the belly; and their glory is in their shame; their minds are set on earthly things. <sup>20</sup> But our citizenship is in heaven, and it is from there that we are expecting a Savior, the Lord Jesus Christ. (Phil 3:18-20)

We heard this, "their god is the belly" last week when Jesus was famished.

<sup>3</sup> The devil said to him, "If you are the Son of God, command this stone to become a loaf of bread. (Luke 4:3)

We heard of the power, the glory, and with that, the wealth offered to Jesus:

Then the devil led him up and showed him in an instant all the kingdoms of the world. <sup>6</sup> And the devil said to him, "To you I will give their glory and all this authority; for it has been given over to me, and I give it to anyone I please. (Luke 4:5-6)

We heard the devil attempt to persuade Jesus to test God and his faith within these words:

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<sup>2</sup> Van Harn, Roger E.. *The Lectionary Commentary Theological Exegesis for Sunday's Texts, The Third Readings: Gospels*. Grand Rapids: William B. Eerdmans Publishing Company, 2001. The commentary based on the appointed Gospel reading for the Second Sunday in Lent, Year C, Gospel Lesson: Luke 13:31-35, pages 397-400.

"<sup>9</sup> Then the devil took him to Jerusalem, and placed him on the pinnacle of the temple, saying to him, "If you are the Son of God, throw yourself down from here,"<sup>10</sup> for it is written, 'He will command his angels concerning you, to protect you,'<sup>11</sup> and 'On their hands they will bear you up, so that you will not dash your foot against a stone.'" (Luke 4:9-10)

What we heard in this temptation story last week is what we hear once again this week from St. Paul. In these lessons we see how we turn to the self, we turn to the things that feed us, the things that please us, and the things that give us power over something or someone and we turn away from God by claiming to be "good Christian people." And this is what Jerusalem represents today in our Gospel lesson.

We, like Jerusalem, want a God that is like us...we don't want a suffering god, we don't want a god who simply walks away from the devil, we want a god who will take our side and put to death anyone or anything that challenges our notion of faith, our power, our prestige, or our political might and this is exactly what Jerusalem has come to. Jerusalem is a religion that is centered on itself rather than a Messiah who like a mother hen will protect us all by sheading his blood for us, to feed us, and to protect us from the bondage of the self.

Today we are shown that our reliance is on the things that serve ourselves. Here today in this exchange between the Pharisee and Jesus, they attempt to dissuade Jesus according to their human dimension or their human perspective that they assume will turn Jesus away from God's mission. However, like last week, Jesus remains true to the trust and hope of God. Jesus shows us that he does not turn toward his own gain or trust his own belly or glory, he shows us that his trust does not lie in the political rulers like Pharisees, rather his trust, his faith, and his hope remains in God the Father.

And as Jesus journeys to the cross he heads into the city of Jerusalem and the people who rejected all that God has previously sent to them. Jerusalem is that place for those who think of themselves as "people of God" but are actually a people who reject God's purpose for their lives and turn to their own ways and means and reject the hope and promise of God...Jesus refers to this when he laments:

<sup>34</sup> Jerusalem, Jerusalem, the city that kills the prophets and stones those who are sent to it!  
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