

Luke 13:31-35

31At that very hour some Pharisees came and said to him, “Get away from here, for Herod wants to kill you.” 32He said to them, “Go and tell that fox for me, ‘Listen, I am casting out demons and performing cures today and tomorrow, and on the third day I finish my work.

33Yet 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.’ 34Jerusalem, 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 hen gathers her brood under her wings, and you were not willing! 35See, your house is left to you.

And I tell you, you will not see me until the time comes when you say, ‘Blessed is the one who comes in the name of the Lord.’”

The Sermon

Wants and desires collide. Herod wants Jesus dead.

Some in the religious community want to warn Jesus to escape.

They’ve seen Herod and his relatives routinely dispatch all threats against them by having them killed. Remember John the Baptizer?

Now, Herod comes gunning for Jesus. Jesus says he’s too busy healing and delivering people from spiritual torment to be interrupted by a fox wanting to guard the hen house.

As for the Pharisees...the commentaries all sound the same note of caution against thinking when you’ve seen one Pharisee you’ve seen them all. It’s likely Jesus had more in common with them than with many of the other strands of Judaism. Jesus eats and prays with Pharisees. Sometimes, He argues with them. Some the debates are respectful. Some of the debates are hostile. In today’s Gospel reading some Pharisees want to warn Jesus that Herod is targeting him.

Jesus doubles down on his mission. Luke says in chapter nine Jesus sets his face to Jerusalem. We hear him lament for the city. But only that city? What is it about Jerusalem that matters so much?

I agree with New Testament professor Matt Skinner from Luther seminary that it's not historically fair that Jesus would quote a line about Jerusalem being a city that kills its prophets.

Jerusalem was a city of aspiration a holy place sometimes called Zion. Jerusalem was a place that rejected prophets too. Jesus was dedicated in Temple at Jerusalem. He went to feasts there.

Jerusalem is also headquarters for the occupying Roman empire. It's where the puppet potentate Herod pretends to be in charge.

Yes. Some prophets died there. Jesus, a prophet dies there.

Now Jesus presses toward Jerusalem and his final destiny. The tempter wants to distract Jesus with baubles of power and privilege. The disciples sometimes push back against Jesus' agenda too—especially that whole being handed over to the authorities and death by torture thing.

Jesus laments, voicing his deep longing to shelter and protect his people—like a mother hen protecting her chicks. We might find it odd that Jesus doesn't compare himself to an avenging raptor or a protective lioness, or she bear. As the hen spreads her wings, her little ones fly the coop. There lies the pathos and tragedy of Jesus' words.

The very people he wants to shelter, heal, and comfort aren't having it. Here Jesus' yes for us collides with our 'no'. The resistance from everyone is growing and it gets Jesus killed.

Maybe we hope if we scurry off, we can escape—

Herod— or Good Friday—

or suffering— or even death.

What happens if we linger with image of the mother hen and not the she wolf or tigress? We might conclude that storms and predators will come...and Jesus isn't the mighty avenger but the one who absorbs the violence...And for reasons

beyond fathoming, it is necessary that Jesus goes to Jerusalem, through Jerusalem, to his own arrest, and through his own execution.

The prophets announce God's end game where the cunning fox, the Imperial eagle, and the marauding bear are denied the last word. Instead, God's future opens the way for the lion and the lamb to lie down together in peace—

God chooses to rebut our NO with a divine YES.

God chooses to refute death with resurrection.