

Luke 13:31-35

Lent 2; March 13 & 14, 2022

He had to work hard to overcome challenges in his life. Life on the American frontier in the early 19th century was no picnic for anyone; it required hours of back-breaking work day in and day out. His family was no exception. He was born in a one room cabin on the farm in Kentucky in 1809. His father would lose all his land due to lack of land surveying and unclear property titles and had to move to the family to Indiana in 1816. Like most children of that time, he was expected to perform chores and tasks that he was capable of handling on the farm. His mother would die just 2 years later. 3 years later, his father would remarry. He would work the land and help his father for about 10 more years. During those years, he would only attend school occasionally, a few months at a time.

In 1832, he would run for his first political office, and he would lose. He would open a general store in partnership with another man. The store was not profitable and had to shut down. He was left with heavy debt. He had self-taught himself over the years. So, after the store had failed, he began to teach himself law. He would run again for the Illinois state legislature again, and this time he would win. Soon after he passed the bar, and began to work as a lawyer. He would marry, and would begin to have children. He would fail to receive his party's nomination to be a U.S. Senator. He would lose his party's nomination to be Vice President of the United States. However, finally, in 1860 he would be elected to be the 16th President of the United States. In 1863, President Abraham Lincoln would sign into law the Emancipation Proclamation, freeing slaves in territories held by Confederates. A year later, he would be re-elected President only to be assassinated a year later. As he faced obstacles in his life, he was always determined to overcome them. On the topic of determination, he said: *"Always bear in mind that your own resolution to succeed, is more important than any other one thing."* Imagine what our country would be like, if Abraham Lincoln would have thrown up his hands and given up.

Today, we see another man who is determined to carry out the task that he was assigned. Jesus had a determination to go forward that no man or even Satan himself could stop him. Jesus was on his way to the cross. Luke writes: **"At that time some Pharisees came to Jesus and said to him, 'Leave this place and go somewhere else. Herod wants to kill you.'**" You look at those words at first and think: *"What?"* They had been trying to find a way to get rid of Jesus for years. Why the sudden concern for Jesus' life? They had no concern for Jesus' life. They thought that they might be able to put fear into his heart. Who is this Herod? In the pages of Scripture, there are a number of different Herod's mentioned. This Herod's father was the Herod who killed all the baby boys under the age of 2 after Jesus was born. This is the Herod who beheaded John the Baptist. What they were really trying to say to Jesus: *Nobody wants you here! We don't want your message! There is no way that we will ever want you here! Go away!*

But this Herod wasn't going to scare Jesus away. The Pharisees weren't going to scare Jesus away. **"Go tell that fox, 'I will keep on driving out demons and healing people today and tomorrow, and on the third day I will reach my goal.' In any case, I must press on today and tomorrow and the next day—for surely no prophet can die outside Jerusalem!"** He could see through their schemes. Jesus was not going to be stopped by their threats. Why was Jesus so determined to go to Jerusalem to die? He was determined to save this world from its sins. He was determined to save you from your sins.

But there is another question that comes to mind when you look at this text. *How do you help someone when they don't want to be helped?* It's really easy for us to help people who need help when they beg for help. It's easy to help those who we love. It's a lot harder for us to love those who hate us, isn't it? Yet, nothing is going to stop Jesus loving those who don't want his help, who don't want anything to do with him and who hate his guts. He's still going to love them.

How do we see that relentless love of Jesus? He first of all laments Jerusalem and the people of Israel. **"Jerusalem, Jerusalem, you who kill the prophets and stone those sent to you."** His heart still breaks for God's people. It only takes a spark to start a forest fire. It only takes a sin to bring death and destruction into this world. It only takes a sin to bring the weight of guilt upon our hearts. You might look at something that you might have done in the past and think that God will never forgive me for that? Yet, God wants you to know that nothing is going to stop him from loving you. He wants to lift that guilt off of you. He wants you to know that he loves you dearly.

Jesus wanted the people of his day to know that nothing was going to stop him from loving this world. All he wanted to do was to gather his sinful people to himself. He uses a familiar picture. **“How often I have longed to gather your children together, as a hen gathers her chicks under her wings.”** Think about this picture. There’s a forest fire. After the fire has been knocked down pretty good by the efforts of the fire fighters. They are now working their way back through the burned-out woods to put out the hot spots. So, they would turn logs over by kicking them with their boots to see if there are hot spots under that log that needs to be extinguished. One of those fire fighters come upon a bird that was badly burned and had died. As he turns the body of the bird over, he sees something remarkable. Underneath the one bird comes out from under her several little birds that were still alive. That mother had done the same thing that Jesus says in these words. She had spread her wings over her children so that they could live. Jesus spreads his wings over you and me so that we might live. He gives his life so that we might live.

How do we know that Jesus has done that? He answers that question by saying: **“On the third day I will reach my goal.”** He would pay for our sins on the cross. Easter Sunday would be the proof that it was accomplished. **On the third day** he came out of the tomb and declared his victory our victory. A victory that he was determined to complete. Nothing was going to stop Jesus from loving this world. Nothing will stop God from loving you. **“Blessed is he who comes in the name of the Lord.”** Amen.