

*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 keep on driving out demons and healing people today and tomorrow, and on the third day I will reach my goal.’* <sup>33</sup> *In any case, I must press on today and tomorrow and the next day—for surely no prophet can die outside Jerusalem!*

<sup>34</sup> *“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, and 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)

### **Press On**

When he called, he was wreck, to put it nicely. He explained his situation and I listened to what he had to say. After a while he asked, “What do you think I should do?” After pinpointing some of the main issues we made a plan together. We agreed that he needed to be in church and have his devotional time with the Lord. We agreed to some changes in his lifestyle choices that were wrecking his life and his relationships with other people. We agreed he wanted to make positive changes. Things sounded good. Then he calls again next week—same guy, same issues, still hasn’t done anything. This repeats for a while until eventually he stops calling and ignores all of my phone calls and attempts to contact him. From what I could tell nothing changed. I tried to help. I still want to help. He refuses to be helped. What are you supposed to do? You know what this is like. Jesus does too.

There he is traveling amongst the towns and villages in the northern part of Israel known as Galilee and Perea. Evidently Jesus has the attention of some powerful people. The tetrarch, one in charge of this region, Herod Antipas supposedly sent some of the religious leaders—the Pharisees—to warn Jesus. The message is simple: **“Leave this place and go somewhere else. Herod wants to kill you”** (Luke 13:31).

You would think Jesus would quickly pack up his bags and get out of there. After all, this is the same Herod who beheaded John the Baptizer because someone asked for it on a platter. Instead Jesus basically responds, “Yeah, how about, no?” Jesus can see through it all. He knows how Herod was a cunning fox trying to scare Jesus away while Herod hid in the background. Jesus knows that his running south would be beneficial for both Herod and the Pharisees. But it wouldn’t be for Jesus. Jesus knew his own timeline. He knew what eventually would happen to him in Jerusalem. But, that time had not come yet. So, Jesus replies, **“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.’<sup>33</sup> In any case, I must press on today and tomorrow and the next day—for surely no prophet can die outside Jerusalem”** (v.32,33).

I think about how I react when someone has rejected the Good News. I think about my response when I have a pretty good feeling about how someone might react. It’s hard to be willing to share again when it’s been rejected once before. It’s hard not to blame ourselves—maybe I could have said something differently, maybe I should have done this instead...It’s not hard to get upset with the person because you have exactly what they need but they don’t want to listen. If we were in Jesus’ sandals, we may have advised him to do something quite differently. Why poke the proverbial fox? Why stick around? They obviously don’t want you up here, Jesus.

Instead, Jesus loves them, **“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, and 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’”** (v.34-35). God had sent prophet after prophet to lead his people back to him. He had been relentless. He did not stop. Even when his people killed his messengers and hurled rocks to stone them, the Lord continued to send them. Why? Because he wants to gather them to him. He wants to protect them. God wants all to be saved. He does not take pleasure in the death of the wicked. He does not immediately burn those who reject him in hell fire.

And thanks be to God this is true for them and for us. No, we haven’t looked to kill any of His prophets. And, you are right, we haven’t picked up stones to throw at his messengers. The fact is you picked yourself up to be here today to hear his messenger and be fed with His Word. At the same time, what certain things do you hear God’s Word tell you that you don’t want to hear? More often than not, you know what God calls you to do in your life. We even will say, “I know...I should...I need to...” but then we don’t. Think about it; what is it for you? Is it how he calls you to love even those who have not loved you? Is it what how he calls us to treat his gift of sex and marriage? Is it how we are to honor and respect those placed in governing positions over us? Maybe there’s that pet sin that you choose to keep around because it has its hook on you and you’re listening to the lie that life won’t be good enough without it. There’s the grudge that you are holding onto because she said that about you and you promised you would never forget it. You know there is something that you really need to do; you want to do it because it is following God’s will. But right now is just not the time. You’ve heard the message preached. You’ve heard God calling to you to turn from your sin and live.

But you don't want to today. Maybe later. That's rejecting the message just as much as throwing stones at it.

Then there are times when we can feel Jesus trying to bring us under his wings to protect and we do our best to run away. He says come to me and I'll give you rest, but instead you might try to find "rest" in doing more, fulfilling certain life goals, achieving these experiences, there's always way more work. He promises you forgiveness full and free to calm your troubled heart, instead you might insist that you have to feel worse for what you did wrong to pay for what you did. Here's Jesus wanting to gather you in to feed you with Word and Sacrament, but your mind is off thinking about who knows what and so you leave with your soul still starving. Here is the Lord wanting to help you, and look at how we so often react. Why?

Because following Jesus isn't always easy. He tells us to follow him means we must pick up our crosses—that is, saying "no" to self. Following him doesn't mean you will have glory in this world. Having as comfortable life as your neighbor may not be what God has in store for you. God may call you to suffer greatly. Like Jesus, you will face rejection. And, by nature, we want easier. We want the shortcut. We convince ourselves that that way is better when Jesus clearly tells us he is the Way, the Truth, and the life. What is Jesus supposed to do for us who so often refuse his help?

He presses on. He keeps teaching, preaching, and coming to you. He knows how tempting this all is for you. But he's not going to let anything stop him completing his mission and goal. Whether it is real or not, Herod can threaten all he wants. Jesus has work to do. He's going to keep on driving out the demons and healing the sick and when the time is right, he will reach his goal. Jesus knows where he is going to end up: **surely no prophet can die outside of Jerusalem.** It's an indictment on the entire nation of Israel, their history, and how they treated God's messengers. Here is Jesus, the greatest prophet, where else should he die but Jerusalem? He knows it! And still he is determined to go because this is his end. This is his goal. To die in Jerusalem for you.

Jesus would take no shortcuts along the way though many were offered. There would be temptations from Satan himself, political rulers, and religious leaders but with his face set on Jerusalem Jesus will eventually go only once all of his work in Galilee is done. And even then nothing is going to turn him away. He goes knowing that he will face the worst rejection. A close friend would betray him. A close follower will deny him. Those he came to save would not receive him but would call out, "Crucify him." He would pick up his cross for us who cannot carry our crosses on our own. Those he prays for forgiveness will drive nails through his

sinless flesh. When faced with the temptation to take the shortcut away from the pain and suffering and come down from the cross, he stays because he is determined to save you. On that cross he claims all of their rejection as his own only to face the worst rejection when God forsakes Jesus who became sin for us. And because the consequence of sin is death, he who became sin for us dies.

But the Father would not let his holy Son rot in the tomb. Jesus' perfect life, innocent determination and precious blood paid for our sins and was accepted Father. On Easter morning Jesus is raised with a glorious body. That same living Jesus powerfully brings everything under his control so that he might guard and protect you. You who have been baptized into Christ have been clothed with Christ and are a new creation. You are protected from God's wrath because in those waters you have a clear conscience before God. Your sins are forgiven because Jesus was determined to lay down his life for you and picks it up again.

Jesus knows how defenseless we are on our own. So he blesses and keeps you, the Lord's face shines on you protecting and guarding you along the way of life. We will have to wait for heaven to see all of the dangers and disasters he has kept us from because we leave his house with the Lord's blessing.

He guards us inwardly with the protection of his Word and Sacrament. It keeps us in the one true faith. It arms us as we continue to fight off Satan's temptations, the attacks of this sinful world, and our own sinful natures. So be in that Word. Receive the Sacrament. It's given and poured out for you for the forgiveness of sins. It's a gift. Use it.

So what are supposed to do when someone refuses to be helped? Press on. Thank the Lord he is so gracious that he continues to show me and give me Jesus who was determined in my place to save me. Thanks be to God that he gives me His Spirit that works in my heart to keep in this one true until life everlasting. Press on loving your neighbor. You don't have to save them; they have a perfect Savior in Jesus. Stay faithful to your calling. When there is opportunity to share Jesus, do so. If you are unable to do that, be like the disciple Philip who told questioning Nathaniel: "Come and see" and invite them to be here with you. Take them to God's throne and know he gives you mercy and grace. Press on, dear brothers and sisters in Christ, stand firm in the Lord. Amen.