



**Sunday 16<sup>th</sup> March 2025**

***The Second Sunday of Lent***

## **Gospel Reading**

**Luke 13.31-35**

### **The Lament over Jerusalem**

<sup>31</sup> At that very hour some Pharisees came and said to him, 'Get away from here, for Herod wants to kill you.' <sup>32</sup> He 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. <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 away from 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! <sup>35</sup> See, 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.'"

**Other Readings: Genesis 15.1-12,17-18    Psalm 27    Philippians 3.17 - 4.1**

## **Homily**

Do you sometimes read passages of scripture and think, 'I have no idea what that's about,' and so gloss over it and read on until you find something that make more sense? If you do, you are not alone. For me, this could easily one of those passages. I find myself asking 'What is Jesus talking about?'

The passage is only four verses long but it's packed with ideas and images. And they don't relate to each other in an obvious way. There are several references to time: 'at that very hour'; 'today, tomorrow and the following day'; 'the third day'... Jesus also describes what he is doing: casting out demons; and performing cures. It's dramatic and exciting. Jerusalem (so good they named it three times!); foxes and hens (not necessarily a great combination from the hen's perspective); and a line from what we call the Benedictus, 'Blessed is he comes in the name of the Lord.'

Sometimes when you're faced with such a passage, the best thing to do is just pick one bit, one image, one idea that resonates for you rather than trying too hard to make it all fit together. So, although I'll offer some comments on various aspects of the reading, do feel free to 'zoom in' on any that particularly speak to you. And as to the difficulty of seeing how it all fits together, let's see that as an invitation to return to the passage over the week ahead to see what else it might hold for us.

The story starts with the Pharisees warning Jesus that Herod is after him. Are they actually being helpful for once? Well, maybe, maybe not. Judging by the reaction they get from Jesus, it seems more likely that they are trying to intimidate Jesus into leaving. But Jesus is not cowed in the face of Herod's power and swagger. He calls him a fox. We might think of foxes as being cunning and wily, but in the Old Testament a person described as a fox is common, mean and contemptible. Jesus is playing a dangerous game by insulting Herod in this way. But by sending the message that he is performing miracles rather than preaching and teaching, he's also demonstrating a lack of interest in Herod's type of political power. As Christians, we *sometimes* need to stand up against corruption and injustice, but we *always* need to be concerned with helping one another and meeting people's needs.

As Jesus goes on, though, we get a sense of a man on a mission – he has to finish his course. He is working to his timescale not Herod's and we get a hint of what is to come with the three day/third day reference most likely a foreshadowing of his death and resurrection. If so, Jesus' mission isn't accomplished just by healing people who are unwell in various ways – it is only fully accomplished when he dies on the cross. As Christians, we can sometimes be so familiar with the *sight* of the cross that we lose touch with its *meaning*. As we prepare to celebrate Holy Week and Easter once again, we have opportunity to reflect more deeply on its wonder and mystery.

And then we have this wonderful maternal image of Jesus as the mother hen gathering her chicks. When we're tempted to squabble over pronouns for God, let's remember that Jesus used this vivid image himself to describe his own identity. Julian of Norwich in the fourteenth century described Jesus as our mother and here is the precedent for that. It's an idea that's been around for a long time. As Christians, we can sometimes lose touch with the *tenderness* of God's love for us, especially in a sombre season like Lent.

And finally, there is a quote from Psalm 118: 'Blessed is he who comes in the name of the Lord.' Psalm 118 is one of the Psalms that is recited at the major Jewish festivals including Passover. Jesus may be leaving a clue here about his journey to Jerusalem. The next time we hear that phrase, it's Palm Sunday and the story of Jesus arriving in Jerusalem on the back of a donkey. As Christians, we remind ourselves frequently in our worship, however, that Jesus is the 'Blessed One', the 'One who comes in the name of the Lord'. He is God's Messiah, the Christ, who comes to die in order that death might be defeated.

Trying to put all this together might feel a bit too much like solving a cryptic crossword puzzle. But has anything stood out within it that might help you on your journey through Lent and towards Easter?

### **Conversation Questions**

1. One of the features of this passage is Jesus standing up to bullies, people who abuse power and manipulate people. You might be able to identify someone who has intimidated you and made you act against your instinct or will. You might have

witnessed someone else being bullied. Does being a friend of Jesus make you feel brave or more scared? What can help us imitate Jesus in this way and resist abuses of power and the exploitation of vulnerable people?

2. Jesus uses the image of a mother hen to describe his relationship to us. How does that make you feel? There are a couple of images to get you started.



3. Martin Luther is alleged to have said, 'If I thought the world would end tomorrow, I would still plant a tree.' He probably didn't say it, but someone did. When faced with imminent death, Jesus continues to cast out demons and cure sick people. In uncertain times, what do you feel God calling you to do and why?
4. Is there anything else from the passage not already discussed that speaks to you? What is it?
5. What will you do this week in your Monday-to-Saturday ministry in response to what you have heard today? #everydayfaith

### **Prayer**

Spend some time in prayer, responding to what you have heard today and listening to what God might be saying to you.

### **Collect of the day**

*Almighty God,  
you show to those who are in error the light of your truth,  
that they may return to the way of righteousness:  
grant to all those who are admitted  
into the fellowship of Christ's religion,  
that they may reject those things  
that are contrary to their profession,  
and follow all such things as are agreeable to the same;  
through our Lord Jesus Christ,  
who is alive and reigns with you,  
in the unity of the Holy Spirit,  
one God, now and for ever.*

*(or)*

*Almighty God,  
by the prayer and discipline of Lent  
may we enter into the mystery of Christ's sufferings,  
and by following in his Way*

*come to share in his glory;  
through Jesus Christ our Lord.*

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