

Sunday Sermon: March 17, 2019

Sermon Text: Luke 13:31-35

Sermon Theme: Uncovering the Lies of the Devil: It's Just Too Hard to Follow

<sup>31</sup> 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 drive out demons and heal people today and tomorrow, and on the third day I will reach my goal.' <sup>33</sup> In any case, I must keep going today and tomorrow and the next day—for surely no prophet can die outside Jerusalem!

<sup>34</sup> "O 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, but 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.'"

There was a man who seemed to have the deck stacked against him his whole life. He was born into a very large, very poor family. He could not attend school regularly when he was growing up because he had to work to support his family.

He wanted more for himself. While he did not spend as much time in school as other children, he was very good at teaching himself. He tried to start a business and it failed. He taught himself law and passed the bar exam, but then had a nervous breakdown. He got a job that used his talents in the law, but then found himself in the middle of a debate that forced him to choose one of the unpopular sides.

He tried to climb the ladder in this job, but failed to get the promotion he was looking for. When he finally did get the promotion, war broke out and he had to try to find a way to get things done when everyone hated everyone else.

While life was hard at work, it was harder at home. During this time of war, his son died and his wife suffered her own nervous breakdown.

He continued on, forging ahead with his plan to end slavery and reunite the country even though it was unpopular. The only thing that could stop him was the bullet of an assassin.

I am talking about Abraham Lincoln. If you look at Lincoln's life there were so many times that he could have thrown up his hands and said, "It's just too hard. I can't do it anymore." But he didn't.

Studies have shown that there are basically two types of people when it comes to problems. There are those who see a problem as something to figure out and solve and there are others who see them as walls that are too high to climb and too wide to go around.

Which type of person are you?

This morning we look at the second great lie of the devil. It's too hard to follow..... We will see that while the devil is hard at work, the Lord is also there to lead us where we need to go.

We don't know how long it was between Jesus' transfiguration and his entry into Jerusalem. While we don't know the length, we do know what Jesus was doing during that time. He was making final preparations for his suffering and death. A large part of those final preparations was getting the disciples prepared for all the things that must happen to him.

It was during this time that he Pharisees from to Jesus with the pretense of friendship and helping Jesus. **"Leave this place and go somewhere else, Herod wants to kill you."**

By now it was clear how the Pharisees and chief priests felt about Jesus. By now it was clear that they were following Jesus not to worship him, but instead to trick and trap him at any time. The Pharisees own attempts at stopping Jesus were not working. Their own threats and plots and tricks were not successful, so it appears that they were using Herod's name to try to scare Jesus so that he would stop preaching and teaching and go away.

They come to Jesus with a half-truth. It was no secret that Herod had killed John the Baptist. The Pharisees are using that knowledge to make it seem as if Herod wanted to kill all teachers of this new religion. Yet, Herod had not killed John because he was preaching about the Messiah, he had killed John because John has spoken out against his adultery and called it out for what it was, a sin. Herod had killed John the Baptist because he hated John the Baptist. But here the Pharisees come with their lie.

Jesus sees through their lies. He says, **“Go tell that fox.... I will reach my goal. I must keep going today and tomorrow and the next day.”**

Jesus is not afraid of the attacks of the Pharisees or of Herod, he calls this trick and all involved in it a fox, sly and cunning. He knows what they are trying to do, but he will not be stopped. He will not be turned away from what it is he is here to do.

Jesus goes even a step further and calls the leaders of Jerusalem, these Pharisees and even Herod unbelievers. **You who kill the prophets and stone those sent to you. I have longed to gather your children together, but you were not willing.**

This type of treatment by the leaders of the Jews was nothing new. It was something that had happened to many of God’s true prophets in the Old Testament. In our Old Testament reading, the Lord sent Jeremiah to prophesy against the sin and unbelief of the kings of Judah. What was their response? They wanted to kill him. This was the same thing that was happening to Jesus. He was sent from God to preach sin and grace, repentance and forgiveness, and the people rejected that message and not only threatened to kill him, but actually did just that.

When the Pharisees were speaking did you hear the temptation the devil brought through them? Leave this place, it is too dangerous here. Find someplace safer to preach and teach God’s Word. It’s just too hard to follow your God and do it here. There is truth in that statement; there will be persecution if we follow God and his way.

For Jeremiah, the truth in the temptation was that the kings and officials would not listen and would want to kill him.

For Jesus, the truth in the temptation was it would be hard to follow God’s path because he knew that it would mean that he would be persecuted and die, just like the prophets of old.

The devil uses this same temptation against us. The devil wants us to believe that it is just too hard to remain Christ-centered, Bible-grounded people today. He sends us persecution against us in a number of ways. Maybe it is the media who no longer cover their contempt for someone who builds their life on a Biblical foundation. Maybe it through policies and laws that call what God has told us hate-speech, misogynistic, or backwards. Maybe it through friends and acquaintances who laugh and tell us, you can’t say that, when we stand on what we believe. Maybe it comes through others who claim to accept all ideas, thoughts and opinions, except those that stand with the Bible.

All of these pressures that we face every day are really the devil tempting us that it’s too hard to follow God’s way. Many times we fall into those temptations. We begin to conform what we say and do to a way that fits with friends, family and others who do not believe as we do. We no longer stand up for God’s way and his Word in a discussion that really needs us to. We make the assumption that people don’t want to hear about God, rather than actually taking the time to speak with them about God.

Unlike Jesus, when we hear the devil’s temptation, we agree with him. We listen to that temptation and we run from God’s way to a way that is easier and safer for us.

Jesus did not run. He continued on knowing that the Pharisees hated him and would kill him. He continued on because he trusted in the plan that God had. He believed that God would lead him on the path that he needed to take and he would reach his goal.

It is God who gives us strength to continue on our way. It is God who promises that he will be with us to help us reach our goal. In the Old Testament reading, Jeremiah did not rely on his own words and his own message, he relied on the Lord to see him safely through. There are many other lessons of God’s love and protection in the Bible. God protected David against Goliath and again when Saul wanted to kill him. He protected the three men in the fiery furnace from king Nebuchadnezzar. He protected Daniel in the lion’s den from the hungry lions.

This is the truth that the devil does not want us to know. The devil wants us to believe that it is too hard to follow God’s way because God isn’t strong enough to take care of us when these problems and trials come. The devil wants us to see a wall of persecution in front of us and not the strength of our God who says, “I am with you. Trust in me.”

When we fly to the word, it doesn’t take us long to hear these promises of God’s power to save us many times in his Word. Let’s listen to a few. Psalm 91. **He will command His angels concerning you to guard you in all your ways.** Psalm 118. **The Lord is with me; I will not be afraid, what can man do to me?** Psalm 27 **The LORD is my light and my salvation; whom shall I fear? the LORD is the strength of my life; of whom shall I be afraid?** Romans 8:1. **If God is for us, who can be against us.**

We don’t just need to hear these promises of God to save, we can also see that love in action. When Jesus said he would reach his goal, he was talking about God’s ultimate promise of protection and preservation, the blessing of heaven. Jesus goal was in Jerusalem. God would not allow him to be put to death before that. In Jerusalem, Jesus would allow himself to finally be arrested, tried and put to death so that we could be protected for

eternity. Jesus goal was to die to defeat the devil. Jesus goal was to pay for all the sins that we commit, even when we are too weak to follow him. Jesus goal was to defeat the power of the devil. Just as he said he would. Jesus did all of that, so that we would not have to be afraid of the persecutions we have on earth. We already have the blessing of heaven.

What kind of a person are you when trouble and problem come. Do you see it as a wall too high to get over or around, or do you see it as something to figure out? What kind of person are you when the devil tempts you that following God is too hard? With the power of God on your side, you never have to give in to the devil's temptation that it is just too hard to follow God's path because Jesus has already made that path lead to heaven for you.