

## Discipleship in the Lectionary – 03/16/2025



A look at the week's lectionary through the lens of discipleship and disciple-making.

**Second Sunday in Lent**

Revised Common Lectionary Year C

Sunday, March 16<sup>th</sup>

**Luke 13:31-35**

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### Jesus laments over what might have been

The short but challenging lectionary text this week includes Jesus' lament over Jerusalem. There are many varied opinions on the meanings of this text and whether it is one unit or two. Regardless, it is inevitable that this text leads us to consider the present state of our world and about how we have fallen short. Lent is the season where we are encouraged to be honest about our sin and to lament over how we have missed the mark.

#### Luke 13:31-35 Commentary

The short, five-verse lectionary text is located within Jesus' journey from Galilee to Jerusalem - commonly referred to as the Travel Narrative (9:51-19:27). The Travel Narrative begins in the aftermath of The Transfiguration, "*When the days drew near for him to be taken up, he set his face to go to Jerusalem*" (9:51) and ends with Jesus' triumphal entry into Jerusalem (19:27f). The Travel Narrative is broken up into three parts:

First mention of the journey to Jerusalem	9:51-13:21
Second mention of the journey to Jerusalem	13:22-17:10
Third mention of the journey to Jerusalem	17:11-19:27

The Travel narrative contains mostly teachings. As an example, this is where all of Luke's parables can be found. Appreciating this backdrop and its major themes helps to understand the two separate sections found within the lectionary text.

*<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> And he said to them, "Go and tell that fox, 'Behold, I cast out demons and perform cures today and tomorrow, and the third day I finish my course. <sup>33</sup> Nevertheless, I must go on my way today and tomorrow and the day following, for it cannot be that a prophet should perish away from Jerusalem.'*

This section is unique to Luke. Some commentators suggest these Pharisees were allies of Jesus seeking to warn Him of Herod's intentions. This would mean not all the Pharisees were enemies of Jesus. Other commentators suggest these Pharisees may have been willing accomplices of Herod. In Mark's Gospel we read how the Pharisees joined with the Herodians to plot to kill Jesus (Mark 3:6). The fact that Jesus expects the Pharisees to deliver His message to Herod suggests He knows their hearts.

The last thing Herod needed after the murder of John the Baptist was the death of another prophet on his hands. Earlier in Luke we read how Herod was perplexed by Jesus because it was said by some that Jesus was John the

Baptist raised from the dead. As a result, Herod sought to see Jesus (9:7-9). Perhaps Herod's plan here was to simply move Jesus out of the area of his tetrarchy (which included the region of Galilee).

Jesus refers to Herod as a fox which is a metaphor for being sly and cunning. Jesus plans to continue His ministry in His present location for a few days at least and telegraphs this to Herod. "...and the third day I finish my course" may also be an allusion to Jesus being raised from the dead which He predicted in 9:21-22. Jesus alludes to the fact that He must be on His way since His destiny is in Jerusalem. Jesus is clearly aware of His destiny. The word "must" (*dei*) gives an indication of the powerful sense of purpose Jesus demonstrates. We have seen such "must" statements earlier in Luke: "Did you not know that I must be in my Father's house?" (2:49), "I must preach the good news of the kingdom of God..." (4:43) and "The Son of Man must suffer many things and be rejected by the elders and chief priests and scribes, and be killed, and on the third day be raised" (9:22).

*<sup>34</sup> O Jerusalem, Jerusalem, the city that kills the prophets and stones those who are sent to it! How often would I have gathered your children together as a hen gathers her brood under her wings, and you were not willing! <sup>35</sup> Behold, your house is forsaken. And I tell you, you will not see me until you say, 'Blessed is he who comes in the name of the Lord!'"*

Verses 35 and 36 are found almost word for word in Matthew (23:37-39) only Matthew includes this text much later in the Gospel narrative. In Matthew, Jesus is already in Jerusalem and immediately prior to this text had declared woes on the city's religious leaders. It is not clear why Luke chose to include these verses here. Perhaps it was a connection with the mention of Jerusalem and the death of prophets in verse 33.

The lament of Jesus demonstrates human suffering does not please God. Although He ordained the destruction of the temple (and Jerusalem), He does not take pleasure in the death of the wicked (Ezekiel 33:11). God's desire is clear from the tenderness in the hen and brood imagery. Despite God's desire to offer comfort and protection, Jerusalem continually rejected God's messengers, even killing some. The same was about to happen to the very Son of God. The responsibility for the fate of the Jews is clear, "...you [Jerusalem] were not willing."

The final verse at first glance seems to relate to Jesus' triumphal entry into Jerusalem (19:38). However, it was Jesus' own disciples that were saying, "Blessed is the King who comes in the name of the Lord!" This reference to Psalm 118:26 in verse 35 is more likely to be concerning the second coming when Jesus returns in splendor and Jerusalem finally recognizes His Messiahship.

### Reflection and Application

As someone very familiar with raising chickens, the imagery of the hen and her brood is quite compelling. The hen's tenderness and protective behavior is an apt metaphor for God's grace. The hen will die on the ground to save her chicks when she herself could seek safety. The complete defenselessness of the chicks is also an apt metaphor for the human condition. Unlike the chicks who have the good sense to seek out the protection of the hen, we continuously wrestle with God over His purpose for our lives. We choose to go our own, prideful ways.

We live in a post-Christian world in which our society rejects God at every turn. Despite the many blessings bestowed on the West, like Israel, we reject God in favor of manmade religions, human philosophies, and made-up truths. Our culture of atheistic humanism worships humanity. Yet Jesus still wants to gather us together under His wings, but it is we that are unwilling. How must Jesus be weeping over the fate of the West? Yet it is in this world that the shrinking visible church still stands on the side of God's will, seeking to improve our society through the transformative power of the Gospel that makes new men and new women. We stand together in hope as we look forward to the future and the coming of the Blessed One, who comes in the name of the Lord.