

There, in the kindest tone and in the most urgent manner, he says to each of us personally, "It's OK. I love you. I forgive you. That's why I went to the cross and to hell for you. You are mine. I have prepared in my heavenly kingdom a very special place for you. **'Never will I leave you; never will I forsake you'**" (He 13:5). Dear friends in Christ, hear his invitation, repent of your sin, and cling to him whose compassionate love for you will never let you down or let you go.

I heard once of a young pastor who was boarding at a farmhouse. The farmer was not a Christian, but his wife had been all her life. For as long as he stayed with this couple, the pastor had been looking for an opportunity to share his faith with the unbelieving farmer. Early one morning the farmer called him out to the hen house and said, "I want to show you something." As they entered the chicken coop, he pointed to a hen sitting on her nest with a brood of tiny chicks peeking out from under her wings. "Touch her," the farmer said. The pastor put out his hand to touch the mother hen and quickly noticed that she didn't move. Then he realized that she was dead. "Look at the wound in her neck," the farmer said. "Overnight a weasel got in and drained her body of its lifeblood, but she never moved from her spot on the nest for fear that her little ones might be injured or even killed." The young pastor had found his opportunity to share the compassionate love of Jesus with the farmer. **"Jerusalem, Jerusalem,"** Jesus says, **"how often I have longed to gather your children together, as a hen gathers her chicks under her wings!"** See the compassionate love of Jesus, a love that gives hope, real hope, to those who are without hope.

Jesus has begun his final journey to the city of Jerusalem. He knows what awaits him at the end of the journey, and it's not pretty. That city, which has killed so many of God's prophets, will be the scene of his own bloody and gruesome death. But Jesus will walk that road; he will walk it intentionally and willingly, lovingly and with compassion, for he knows that there is no other way for us to be at peace with God. As we watch him, may we marvel at his compassionate love, and may we join the psalmist to say, **"O, give thanks to the LORD, for he is good; his love endures forever"** (Ps 118:1). Amen.

**Luke 13:31-35** – *His Pain—Our Gain* – 379, 343 (3, 4), 372, 112  
03/17/19 – Pastor David M. Kuehl – St. Paul's. Muskego, WI

To what lengths we'll go for the ones we love! Last Saturday I took my wife's car to the carwash. I noticed later that her I LOVE MY MUTT magnetic sticker was missing from the rear of the car. I returned to the carwash to see if I could find it. After asking permission from the driver of the next car entering the carwash, I walked into the bay and was pummeled with water. I had set off the underbody wash cycle. From head to toe I was soaked. I didn't look back to see what was going on between the driver and his passenger—laughter, calling 911, taking pictures—and I don't know if I robbed them of their paid wash time, but I found the magnet. To what great lengths we'll go for the ones we love!

And if that's true about us, how much more so is it true about the God of our salvation. He didn't just walk into a carwash; in the person of his Son he walked into hell for us. Scripture says, **"God demonstrates his own love for us in this: While we were still sinners, Christ died for us"** (Ro 5:8). It says, **"This is how we know what love is: Jesus Christ laid down his life for us"** (1 Jn 3:16). It's no wonder that during the season of Lent especially we focus our eyes on Jesus, who **"for the joy set before him, endured the cross, scorning its shame, and sat down at the right hand of the throne of God"** (He 12:2). He willingly went to hell that we might be forever free from the pain and the power and the punishment of our sin. In short, *His Pain – Our Gain*. My dear friends in Christ:

### **See the Compassionate Love of Jesus**

- 1. A love that takes him to his certain death**
- 2. A love that grieves for those who reject him**
- 3. A love that gives hope to those who are without hope**

1. Jesus was making his way through the territory of Perea, east of the Jordan River, a territory ruled by King Herod, the same Herod who had beheaded John the Baptist. He was on his way to Jerusalem in Judea. Luke tells us that, as he made his way, **"some Pharisees came and said to him, 'Leave this place and go somewhere else. Herod wants to kill you.'"**

Did we hear that right? The *Pharisees* came to Jesus to warn him of danger? Are these the same Pharisees who at every turn looked for ways to trip Jesus up in his words and who eventually put him to death? Was their warning sincere or did they want to persuade Jesus to go down to Jerusalem where it would be easier for them to put him to death?

Perhaps there was some danger as far as Herod was concerned. We learn in Mark's Gospel that threats against Jesus' life had already been made by the Herodians, a sect of Jews who supported King Herod, and that they were looking for an opportunity to kill Jesus. But at the same time, the Pharisees were using such threats to serve their own selfish purposes. They weren't Jesus' friends. They wanted him in Jerusalem. There the crowds could be driven into a frenzy, and there Jesus wouldn't be nearly as popular as he was out in the rural areas of Galilee and Perea.

What we see here on the part of the Pharisees is a blatant example of hypocrisy, trying to cover up one's true motives with a show of right, a sin of which we today are so often guilty. The story has been told of a famous artist who painted a picture of a friar in his robes. From a distance the friar seemed to be deep in prayer, his hands folded up against his chest, his head bowed down over a book, his eyes cast down in deep humility. On closer inspection, however, the book turned out to be a punchbowl into which the friar was pouring alcohol. The painting was entitled *Religious Hypocrite*. It's so important that we be on our guard against the sin of religious hypocrisy, a sin that leads to empty worship, unproductive lives, and, ultimately, eternal death. It was Jesus who once described the hypocrite this way: *"On the outside you appear to people as righteous but on the inside you are full of hypocrisy and wickedness" (Mt 23:28).*

Listen to Jesus' response to the hypocrisy of the Pharisees. He says, *"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!"* It's true that Jesus makes no direct reference to the Pharisees' hypocrisy, but he does give them an answer. He expresses his utter contempt for King Herod and for any danger that "fox" might represent. In fact, by openly referring to Herod as a fox, a cunning and conniving rascal, Jesus is publicly defying him.

Jesus wanted Herod—and these Pharisees—to know that he would continue to work for a set period of time. He would bring his work of redemption to a close only when and where he chose to do so. His goal, which included his death and resurrection, wouldn't be met until he reached Jerusalem, for it was there that the Scriptures had prophesied his death. And yet, knowing all this (he wasn't caught off guard the way I was in the carwash), Jesus still went willingly. What determination! What love! See the compassionate love of Jesus, a love that takes him to his certain death.

2. Jesus now says something about the city of Jerusalem itself. *"Jerusalem, Jerusalem,"* he cries, *"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. Look, your house is left to you desolate."*

In his compassionate love, Jesus cries out, *"Jerusalem, Jerusalem!"* This city of peace had slaughtered the very men God had sent to it to proclaim his peace. God had sent one prophet after another to his chosen people—each time calling them to repentance and faith, but each time he was rejected. Over and again the people killed the prophets and stoned those whom God had sent to them. Even though this nation belonged to Jesus, even though he was their Messiah and their God, they didn't want him. *"You were not willing,"* Jesus says to them. Think of it. God's own people rejected the very One whom God had sent to save them.

Nothing has changed today. Our Savior still longs for the salvation of the world. *"The Lord...is patient with you, not wanting ANYONE to perish, but EVERYONE to come to repentance" (2 Pt 3:9)* is the way the Apostle Peter puts it in our Second Lesson today. And the Apostle Paul? He says, *"God our Savior...wants ALL people to be saved and to come to a knowledge of the truth" (1 Tm 2:4).* If we are lost, it's not God's fault; it's our fault. Jesus has done everything necessary for our salvation—signed, sealed, and delivered in his death and resurrection—and he grieves every time his love is rejected. See the compassionate love of Jesus, a love that grieves for those who reject him.

3. Jesus concludes by saying, *"I tell you, you will not see me again until you say, 'Blessed is he who comes in the name of the Lord.'"* Jesus is here speaking primarily of his riding into Jerusalem on Palm Sunday, but his words also paint for us a beautiful picture of the heart and mind of our God. We would do well to carry this picture with us at all times, for it is a picture that gives us hope when we feel that God has forsaken us and turned his back on us.

Isn't it a wonder that God hasn't given up on us? How often haven't we rejected him with our self-centered thoughts, our unkind words, and our half-hearted actions? Can't we almost see him wince with pain every time we minimize or trivialize our sin? The nails driven into Jesus' hands and feet are only pinpricks by comparison. And yet, in spite of our forgetting (and sometimes even refusal) to respond to him with gratitude and faith, we find him coming to us time and again in his Word and sacraments.