

Second Sunday in Lent, Year C

A Sermon Preached by The Rev Ian M Delinger

on March 16, 2025

Genesis 15:1-12,17-18 / Psalm 27 / Philippians 3:17-4:1 / Luke 13:31-35

*May my words be acceptable to God; faithful to the teachings of Christ;
and inspired by the Holy Spirit; that we may be blessed by the same Triune God.*

Jesus' lament over Jerusalem in today's Gospel is part of a bigger passage, Luke 12:54-13:35, in which Jesus illustrates the different ways that the people of Jerusalem are on a path to their own destruction. This bit today is the culmination of Jesus' warning.

The political and social situations in Jerusalem were chaotic and full of corruption. The religious situation was no better. And Jesus' message to them then feels like it is being said to us today. The chaos in Washington is not dissimilar to the chaos in Jerusalem, and both include a heavy dose of religion in the mix. From this passage, are we able to find our way to God amid the fragility and instability of our own time?

Today, Jesus laments over the city, as I think He would for our country, and as we should, too. Jesus laments because Jerusalem is

the city that kills the prophets and stones those who are sent to it!

Jerusalem refuses to follow God's will despite God sending prophet after prophet after prophet...all of whom end up dead. Jerusalem continues to follow a path toward self-destruction, and Jesus Himself – God Himself – will be rejected...and killed.

Implicit in Jesus' message was a warning about complacency to the everyday people, the average resident of Jerusalem.

*How often have I desired to gather your children together as a hen
gathers her brood under her wings, **and you were not willing!***

Jerusalem was corrupt beyond comprehension, and the people were led to believe that its leaders would and could fix it. And they were *complacent* about everything that was going on around them.

RJ Cassidy wrote in his book *Jesus, Politics, and Society* (p61–62)

Jesus does not show deference to the officials who oversee [the Roman social order]. Whether they are officials of the stature of Herod Antipas or the Jerusalem chief priests, and even if they have the more exalted title of Benefactor, Jesus criticizes them freely. Moreover, Jesus does not submit to the social patterns and practices to which the Romans and their allies are committed. He rejects the violence and exploitation that they accept as a normal part of living, and his teachings and conduct run counter to many of the other patterns that they accept and endorse.

That is as true today as it was then:

[Jesus] rejects the violence and exploitation that they accept as a normal part of living, and his teachings and conduct run counter to many of the other patterns that they accept and endorse.

With their power, money and optical illusions, Herod and Pilate, and the Roman social order thought they controlled the world. Herod – the fox – got rid of anyone who challenged him. Pilate crafted his leadership around the loudest voices around him. No lives matter. The fact that the people don't care that their leaders don't care about anyone but themselves was the warning about complacency that Jesus gave. We, too, should listen to Jesus.

Jesus' mission from the beginning was and is to turn the focus of God's people back toward God. The People of Jerusalem were pretty comfortable and set in their ways and didn't really want to listen to the rantings of a crazy man who kept

breaking Mosaic law. They refused to – or didn't want to – listen to Jesus. And many of them couldn't understand His reasonings when He broke Mosaic Law – like today's healing on the Sabbath – nor did they understand His parables. They didn't see that He was trying to lead them back to God. What Jesus asks of us is too hard. Complacency is easy. Then and now, the people who could push back on the oppressive social order and corrupt government are too comfortable and too set in their ways to even care. And that's what corrupt leadership wants: for us to not care, too look away.

It's important to point out the comfort that the people had whom Jesus addresses throughout His ministry. Those who were financially secure quite often would just go routinely through their religious obligations by taking their sacrifices to the Temple, and then just getting on with their lives. They forgot about the poor, the sick, the environment. They were living in Roman-occupied territory, and they probably just didn't want to cause waves. They had the comfort of their home life and social life to distract them from their journey toward God, living Torah. Living Torah is hard, and daily living offers too many distractions from that journey to God. Complacency is easy, so the greatest crises are ignored.

Jesus knows that His voice is unheard. Jesus knows that the leaders speak of God's will but only pretend to follow it...including the religious leaders. Jesus knows that His Death is drawing near. But He still has work to do:

*I am casting out demons and performing cures today and tomorrow,
and on the third day I finish my work.*

His work is His Death, Resurrection and Ascension. But of course, the Pharisees have no clue because the Pharisees don't believe in Jesus' message. Jesus' message threatens their position within society. They need to be a part of the corruption in order to keep their positions. Jesus and His message are a threat to the stability and comfort the Pharisees have within the corruption. But Jesus already knows that His Death has a divine dimension: He is being perfected.

On the third day I finish my work

is not a good translation. The actual Greek is:

*I am being perfected, or
God is perfecting me.*

On the third day, as Jesus rises from death, God is perfecting Him. And true followers will rise over death with Him. But that is overlooked because Jesus' mission to defeat evil and establish God's rule would be inconvenient. They are on a path to their own destruction...taking *literally* everyone with them

But Jesus is persistent:

On the third day I reach my goal.

The corrupt powers and the complacency of the people will not stop Jesus from His mission.

*How often have I desired to gather your children together as a hen
gathers her brood under her wings, **and you were not willing!***

Be willing! Pull yourself out of complacency. If *All Lives Matter*, now is not the time to be complacent...about anything.

With their power, money and optical illusions, they thought they controlled the world! And when they killed Jesus, they thought they had won! But they were on a path to their own destruction. What they didn't know was that Jesus' Death was His being perfected by God through His Resurrection and Ascension. Jesus conquered Death so that we might have the courage to bring Heaven to earth. Let us not be complacent, let us be perfected by God!