

Sermon for March 16, 2025 – Lent 2

Luke 13:31-35 (EHV)

Theme: **Nothing could stop Jesus from saving you!**

- 1) Not the world's threats and schemes,
- 2) Nor the rejection of those He loves.

³¹In that very hour, some Pharisees came to him and said, "Leave, and go away from here, because Herod wants to kill you."

³²He said to them, "Go tell that fox, 'Look, I am going to drive out demons and heal people today and tomorrow, and on the third day I will reach my goal. ³³Nevertheless, I must go on my way today and tomorrow and the next day, because it cannot be that a prophet would be killed outside Jerusalem!'

³⁴"Jerusalem, Jerusalem, the city that kills the prophets and stones those sent to her! How often I have wanted to gather your children together, as a hen gathers her chicks under her wings, but you were not willing! ³⁵Look, your house is left to you desolate. I tell you, you will not see me until the time comes when you will say, 'Blessed is he who comes in the name of the Lord!'"

Have you ever noticed that the people you try to help often resist you the most? For instance, you may have a toddler you want to help get ready for church, but she screams and kicks as you try to dress her. Or perhaps you have an elderly parent who requires assistance but becomes angry at you for even suggesting they need help.

Human pride naturally resists the idea of needing assistance, pushing away those who genuinely want to assist. And if you are the one offering help, don't you often feel frustrated and want to walk away from those who refuse it, wondering why you even bother?

Thankfully, our Saviour is not like us. As our sermon text reveals, Jesus did not give up doing the good He was born to do, even though we have done much to frustrate Him. Let us rejoice in the fact that **nothing could stop Jesus from saving us:** 1) Not the world's threats and schemes, 2) nor the rejection of those He loves.

Part One: Not the world's threats and schemes.

Our sermon text takes place in Perea, a region under the control of King Herod, situated east of Samaria and Judea. Jesus was gradually making his way to Jerusalem, where He would suffer and die for our sins. Until then, He kept busy teaching about God's kingdom and how it comes to us.

³¹In that very hour, some Pharisees came to him and said, "Leave, and go away from here, because Herod wants to kill you."

Did we read that correctly: Pharisees warn Jesus about an attempt on His life? Why would they do that? Honestly, we don't know. Perhaps they were "good" Pharisees who, like Nicodemus, secretly

followed Jesus and were genuinely concerned for His safety. Alternatively, they might have simply wanted to scare Jesus away to prevent Him from teaching in their region.

Regardless of how serious the threat was, Jesus would not be intimidated. ³²*He said to them, “Go tell that fox, ‘Look, I am going to drive out demons and heal people today and tomorrow, and on the third day I will reach my goal.*

Jesus refused to be deterred from His ministry and continued teaching, healing, and calling people to repentance until He reached His goal: our salvation. And when would He achieve that? At His resurrection, which Jesus alludes to when He mentions the third day. No demon or earthly authority could intimidate Him from His mission of securing our salvation, as He asserts: ³³*Nevertheless, I must go on my way today and tomorrow and the next day, because it cannot be that a prophet would be killed outside Jerusalem!*

As we witness Jesus resolutely fulfill His ministry, we can't help but rejoice. Why? Because He did it for us: to win our salvation. Even more remarkable is that He accomplished it despite our hostility towards Him, as the apostle Paul explains in his letter to the Ephesians: ³⁴*Formerly, we all lived among them (the unbelieving world) in the passions of our sinful flesh, as we carried out the desires of the sinful flesh and its thoughts. Like all the others, we were by nature objects of God's wrath. ⁴But God, because he is rich in mercy, because of the great love with which he loved us, ⁵made us alive with Christ even when we were dead in trespasses. It is by grace you have been saved!*ⁱ

Jesus ministered with love, yet the world responded with fury—determined to thwart the spread of the Gospel. Just as the world raged against Christ in the past, it continues to do so against His followers today. Christians worldwide face intimidation and threats. Some are even killed for their faith, as happened to a Christian congregation in Congo just a few weeks ago.

By God's grace, we are spared from most forms of physical persecution in our country. However, this does not mean that our society does not attempt to hinder our proclamation of the Gospel. Many individuals resort to emotional manipulation and intimidation to prevent us from sharing the message of Christ crucified. They label us intolerant, exclusionary, and hateful because we adhere to the biblical teachings on sin, repentance, and salvation through faith in Jesus.

Regrettably, the devil often succeeds in silencing us with thoughts like: “Why do I even bother if all my confession leads to is confrontation or mockery? It's not like I will ever get them to believe. Maybe I should just give up and keep quiet.”

Brothers and sisters in Christ, don't stop loving the people of this world by abandoning your witness of Christ. Look at your Saviour: nothing could stop Jesus from loving the world. Nothing could stop Him from proclaiming the Gospel. Not only that, but He invites you to come to Him in prayer for the help you need to confess His Gospel to the world. Ask Jesus to grant you a compassionate heart and steadfast spirit like His to sustain you, and He will grant your request. He will send the Holy Spirit to help you be resolute in your loving proclamation of His Gospel.

Part Two: Nor the rejection of those He loves.

After proclaiming His unwavering resolve to accomplish our salvation, Jesus expressed His heartfelt longing ³⁴“*Jerusalem, Jerusalem, the city that kills the prophets and stones those sent to her! How often I have wanted to gather your children together, as a hen gathers her chicks under her wings, but you were not willing!*”

Ironically, the city that God graciously chose for His temple is the very city that executed His messengers of grace. Time and time again, God sent prophets like Isaiah, Jeremiah, and Zechariah to His people to warn them of impending calamity. He did so out of love, yearning only for their repentance and faith. Yet, time and time again, the people rejected God’s call and killed His prophets. Finally, God sent His only begotten Son, Jesus, to minister to the people. Oh, how Jesus loved them—desiring to gather them to Himself so that He could lovingly save, comfort, and protect them from all their enemies. But they were unwilling.

Does that mean Jesus would give up on them? No. Even though He was aware that they would reject Him in unbelief, Jesus resolutely carried out His plan of redeeming them. He willingly and lovingly suffered and died for every one of their sins – desiring their salvation. He remained faithful to His love even when His people continued to be faithless.

However, that does not mean there wouldn’t be consequences for their unbelief. No, the effects would be devastating, as Jesus warned: ³⁵*Look, your house is left to you desolate. I tell you, you will not see me until the time comes when you will say, ‘Blessed is he who comes in the name of the Lord!’”*

In other words, their continued unbelief and rejection of Jesus would ultimately lead the LORD to withdraw His promised presence from the temple in Jerusalem and reside in the new, spiritual temple Jesus would establish: the Holy Christian Church. The Jewish religion would degenerate into a mere shadow of its original purpose. Furthermore, the Jewish temple would be destroyed along with the entire city of Jerusalem. After His ascension, the people would not see Jesus again until Judgment Day. On that day, believers would rejoice and bless His return, just as they did when He entered Jerusalem on Palm Sunday.

What a tragic and horrifying indictment Jesus delivers against His people: their refusal to repent and believe in Him would result in their desolation! Understand that Jesus didn’t say this out of frustration; He spoke the truth in love, yearning for the people to comprehend that, without faith in Him, their religion was nothing but a superficial facade devoid of genuine substance. He wanted His people to repent and be saved.

Brothers and sisters in Christ, I know you might be tempted to wonder how the Jews of Jesus' day could be so foolish as to reject Him. However, the truth is that we are all susceptible to the same temptation. Were it not for God’s grace, we too could fall into the trap of replacing Jesus with a hollowed-out religion. I say this because that is precisely what most of Christianity has already done with Christ today.

The greatest threat to the Christian faith isn't the world's intimidations and persecutions, but rather the pervasive false doctrine that permeates most of Christianity today.

On one hand, we have "progressive Christians," who, like the Sadducees of Jesus' day, question the authority of the Scriptures. They distort God's Word into a mere social gospel, content to discard anything that sounds supernatural. Instead of calling people to faith in Jesus, they rationalize what the Bible calls sin into an acceptable lifestyle – preventing people from genuine repentance.

Then there are the "work-righteous" Christians, who, like the Pharisees, turn the Bible into a rulebook for earning God's favour. Despite their outward appearance of living and promoting godly morality, they lead people away from Christ's forgiving love by burdening people's consciences with things Jesus neither commanded nor taught.

Lastly, there are the complacent, who simply don't care. They resemble most Jews in Jesus' day. They believe that as long as they belong to a church, everything will be okay. However, they don't participate in worship or Bible study because they don't think they need it. All they care about is escaping hell. They don't truly care about Christ. Their worship is akin to Cain's in the Old Testament, going through the motions without genuine faith.

Jesus lived, died, and rose again for all such people. He didn't let their complacency, pride, or abuse of His grace prevent Him from loving and redeeming them. Moreover, He didn't let our pride, complacency, or abuse of His grace stop Him from going to the cross to save us!

Don't let the salvation He resolutely won for you slip away like most of the Jews did. They didn't care enough about Jesus to compare everything He said and did with Scripture. Consequently, they rejected Him, and God rejected them. He withdrew His presence from them, allowing the destruction of Jerusalem and its temple.

Could the same fate befall us? Yes, it could. Therefore, pray to Jesus, seeking His forgiveness for any complacency, pride, or disregard for His grace within your heart. Ask Him to create a new heart within you, filled with joy and gratitude for His salvation. God loves you deeply. He stopped at nothing to save you. He will hear your prayer and grant your request for His mercy's sake. In response, make it your habit to attend worship and Bible classes regularly. Take time at home to meditate on His Word and rejoice in the immense love that Christ has for you - a love that has not wavered despite the world's threats and schemes or the rejection of His people. Amen.

ⁱ Ephesians 2:3-5 EHV