

 *St Paul's Anglican Parish of Ipswich*  
**SUNDAY SERMON**

*Lent 3*

*Delivered by Rev'd Stephen Monsiegnur on the 24th March 2019*

Passage: Luke 13:31-35 (NRSV)

Get away from here, for Herod wants to kill you.

Well here we have some Pharisees, typically represented in the Gospels as opposed to Jesus warning Jesus that Herod is out to kill him. Then as if without a care Jesus calls Herod a Fox.

What is going on?

A why would Jesus call Herod a Fox?

Interestingly the narrative of today's passage only appears in Luke's Gospel. Biblical Scholars argue that we cannot presume that all Pharisees were opposed to Jesus, in fact Joseph of Arimathea and Nicodemus, the two men who buried Jesus after his crucifixion, were both Pharisees and secret followers of Jesus. Consequently these scholars argue that the warnings were likely sincere.

Also, earlier Luke tells us in chapter 9, verses 7-9, how Herod Antipas was perplexed about Jesus and wanted to meet him. So this warning comes as a bit of a surprise. Of course time as lapsed and events may have changed Herod's views.

We need to appreciate that in the Old Testament the fox is destructive, while among the Greeks clever.

Jesus was not necessarily being derogatory toward Herod, rather when we consider his next remarks he was clearly recognising Herod for the danger he was.

Jesus understood his own mission, he understood the risk and probable outcome for himself at least, but he was not going to bow to threats or fear. I do not believe that Jesus wanted the outcome he foresaw but he was committed by faith to God's call of him.

There is much symbolism in today's Gospel. The three days being symbolic of the death and resurrection which are to occur in Jerusalem. The lament over Jerusalem where Jesus using the analogy of the hen gathering her brood of chicks possibly suggesting that while Israel is forsaken there is still time to repent. It is late but not too late.

So what can we discern from this passage?

Recently with the sentencing of Catholic Cardinal George Pell I found myself debating whether I should continue to wear my clerical collar or other items that might identify me as a priest. I was afraid of repercussions, what others might say to me in public spaces. I know that I was not alone in that instance and I suspect that many here today will have their own story of an experience where fear led to them not moving in the direction they should have.

Fear is a human emotion, it is what we use to stay safe, but it can be a hindrance to achieving our goals. In the Garden of Gethsemane a place we are in our Lenten journey walking to with Jesus we will discover Jesus full of fear. But where fear inhibits our ability to serve God it becomes dangerous.

As Christians we are all called to project Jesus Christ to the world. As a priest I am called to a role of leadership. I am called to set an example for other Christians, -- for you. What does it say if because of fear of being mocked for doing what God and the Church has called me to do, I simply stop wearing my collar.

Through baptism we are citizens of two worlds. This world and the divine world of God. Fear of the threats of this world has the potential to separate us from Gods kingdom. We should never let fear hold us back from reaching God's goal for our lives. We should always be willing to use the grace made possible by our faith in Jesus, who is always present through the Holy Spirit.

But fear is not the only danger. We face all types of challenges and threats in our lives: sickness, loss, trouble in relationships etc, tragedies, and disasters. Jesus says, "Press on!"

We have all experienced times in our lives when we question Gods purpose for us. You know those times when it all seems kind of pointless. After having given your all - at least in your view -- You may have asked of God "What more do you want from me?"

Jesus in verse 33 is showing us that the effort must continue until God calls us home. I am reassured by the knowledge that God will not test us beyond our means. All we are called to do is just persevere and never, never give up.

The greatest part of today's Gospel is verse 34b;

"..how I have longed to gather your children together as a hen gathers her chicks under her wings, and you were not willing."

Even though we have and continue to fall short in our return to God of the love shown to us we are never abandoned. We are never left unprotected, God through the Holy Spirit is always near to protect and sustain us.

We are half way through our Lenten journey. Are you committed to God's call of you? Have you found the shelter god provides?

The road ahead will get rougher as we are called to carry greater loads but through faith we know God is with us and we are not called to do more than we are able, we are simply called to listen to God and do our honest best.

Do not give in to the threats and fears, do not let the insidious nature of evil distract you from your task. Through prayer gain the strength God offers. Read scripture and reflect on the message God is giving you from its words. Wear your Christianity in the simplicity of being who God calls you to be so that others can see the strength, resilience and love of Jesus through you.

AMEN