

✠ LUKE 13:31-35 ✠

In Nomine Iesu

It seems that the Pharisees wanted to do Jesus a favor by coming to tell Him to flee because Herod sought His life. But it was no favor. The Pharisees wanted Him gone just as much as Herod did. They were always trying to trap Jesus into denying His preaching and admit that they were in the right. They were not suddenly being benevolent, they were using this as another opportunity to get rid of Jesus: stay and Herod will kill you, go and be gone, but either way you're out of our hair. And had He left, they would have said, "See, He was not from God, else why would He fear Herod?"

But Jesus denounced Herod's authority over Him: "Go tell that fox ..." Jesus did not bow to the authority of Herod, because Jesus must obey His Father's will, not the will of man. Herod could not have arrested, imprisoned, or killed Jesus because that was not the will of God. Just as Jesus would later say to Pontius Pilate, "You would have no authority over me if it were not given to you from on high" (John 19:11). The will of God was that His only-begotten Son would die at the hands of those who were once the chosen people of God, the flesh and blood descendants of Israel, the son of Jacob, the son of Abraham. As it is written, "They have forsaken my law that I set before them, and have not obeyed my voice or walked in accord with it" (Jeremiah 9:13). And also it is written, "They have forsaken the Lord, they have despised the Holy One of Israel, they are utterly estranged" (Isaiah 1:4). And as our Lord said, "It is not possible that a prophet should perish away from Jerusalem."

And so we see and know that it was not only Herod who wanted to put Jesus to death. So also did Jerusalem. That is, the Sanhedrin, the court of the temple. Jesus' preaching had struck a cord; He denounced their religiosity; He denounced their piety; He denounced their prayers; He denounced their lineage; He denounced their intentions; He denounced their holiness; He denounced everything about the falseness of the temple cult. And they hated Him for it.

The very temple that had housed God's name would turn on the Son of God and condemn Him to death as a blasphemer and false prophet. Now that house is forsaken, as it is written, "Behold, I will surely lift you up and cast you away from my presence, you and the city that I gave to you and your fathers" (Jeremiah 23:39). The Jewish Temple is not and never will be the house of God, for God does not dwell in temples built by the hands of men, but in the Temple fashioned by His Word. As it is written, "The greater and more perfect tent not made with hands, that is, not of this creation" (Hebrews 9:11). The earthly city of Jerusalem no longer houses the Temple of God. Jesus is the Temple of God as He says, "Destroy it, and in three days I will rebuild it" (John 2:19). He is the true temple of the Most High God.

When Jesus laments over Jerusalem, that they were sheep without a shepherd, wayward children, bent on rebellion and wickedness, He did not encourage the inhabitants of Jerusalem to flock to the temple, but to come to Him. "O Jerusalem, Jerusalem ... how often would I have gathered your children together as a hen gathers her brood under her wings." Jesus redirects the worship of God, the safety of God, and the salvation of God away from the temple, away

from the city of Jerusalem, and puts it squarely on His own shoulders. He is the Temple where the name of God dwells. He is the Priest that offers the sacrifice to God on behalf of the people. And He is Himself the Sacrifice that is offered for the sins of the people. Thus Jesus is the Blessed One who comes in the name of the Lord to do the will of Lord.

The old covenant is gone. It no longer has any salvific benefit. Circumcision is of no value. The Law cannot save. The Law only condemns; it only brings the wrath of God. No longer are there sacrifices done in the name of God, for the perfect, complete, all-sufficient sacrifice has been sacrificed. The Lamb of God has been placed upon the altar and His blood has been spilled; His life's blood has flowed from His veins and has appeased the wrath of God.

How do we know that His blood is all-sufficient? How do we know that God's wrath has been appeased? Because on the third day God raised His Son from the dead. After the death of sin, the death of death, there was nothing to hold our Lord captive in the tomb, and so He lives. He is the firstborn of the resurrection; He is the Blessed One who comes in the name of the Lord to pronounce freedom to the captives, sight to the blind, life to those who are dying; righteousness to the unrighteous; forgiveness to sinners.

As our Lord said, "Thus it is written, that the Christ should suffer and on the third day rise from the dead, and that repentance and forgiveness of sins should be proclaimed in His name to all nations, beginning from Jerusalem" (Luke 24:46-47). And so it is. The world continues to hear His words: "O Jerusalem, Jerusalem, the cities of man, you who kill the preachers and stone my Church, would you but listen I would gather you under the protection of Baptism in the safety of my name!"

But the world hates the Church of God. She preaches against children rebelling against parents; she preaches against neighbor lying to neighbor; she preaches against homosexuality, adultery, lust, pride, greed, false religions, hypocrisy, gossip, the goodness of mankind, sleeping in on Sundays, going to the game instead of going to hear God's Word, spending money on all manner of useless things while neglecting her buildings and schools, and all the things that the world holds near and dear. And she is hated for it, often even by those who cross her threshold and warm her pews.

She is made fun of. She is ridiculed and ostracized. She is called a bigot and a close-minded buffoon because she stubbornly holds on to the Word of God. She is called a racist because she denounces the religions of man. She is called wicked and unjust because she preaches salvation only through Christ. She is labeled as unscientific and ignorant because she believes God's Word that God created the heavens and the earth and still sustains them. She is called stuffy and boring because she gives greater importance to preaching, teaching, and administering her Sacraments than to fun and entertainment. She is called a fool, for no one but a fool could believe that the blind see, the deaf hear, the lame walk, and the dead are raised.

The unholy trinity, the devil, the world, and our sinful nature, hates the Bride of Christ, and seeks her demise. It invents stories about her and paints ugly pictures of her. Like a teenage rival in the girl's locker room, it does whatever it takes to defame and disgrace its archrival, the Church.

But this is to be expected. A servant is not above his teacher, and a slave is not above his master (Matthew 10:24). So the Church goes on. Despite the world's best attempts to

denounce her truths as lies, she goes on, upheld by the hand that formed her in the womb of Baptism. The church goes on. She is the beacon of light in a dark world. She is bloodied and bruised by those who would have their way with her, yet she stumbles on, ever weak from the blows delivered in the name of progress, science, tolerance, humanity, justice, and equal rights. But ever strong in her Lord, for He is her strength and her shield; her ramparts and her defenses.

The Church will continue wherever Jesus' preaching continues; wherever two or more are gathered in the name of Jesus. She will continue to cast out the demons of unbelief and perform the miracle of forgiving sins. And in the end, she will be perfected; she will finish her course. The One who redeemed her and sanctifies her will call her forth from the tomb, and give to her eternal life. Though she dies today and tomorrow, she will live for eternity in the presence of her Bridegroom, Jesus.

Therefore, O Christian, forget the sin that you have planned carefully and deliberately. Do not test the Lord your God. Repent and confess your sins, for God is merciful and just and will cleanse you of all unrighteousness. Do not reject the rebuke of the Lord but rest in the chastisement of the Almighty, for the Lord disciplines the one He loves, and chastises the child whom He receives (Hebrews 12:6).

Leave the sin of rebellion, for it is the sin of witchcraft (1 Samuel 15:23). Put on Christ, for then you stand in the assembly of the righteous. You will be killed today and tomorrow, you will be hated and spurned, you will be stoned and bludgeoned. But in the end you will stand before the throne of God and Jesus will say to you, "Come, you who are blessed by my Father, inherit the kingdom prepared for you from the foundation of the world" (Matthew 25:34). Remain in your Baptism and be holy.

In the name of the FATHER and of the ✠ SON and of the HOLY SPIRIT.

✠ AMEN ✠