

Putting Out the Welcome Mat
Luke 13:31-35

In the past couple of weeks there has been several high profile court cases that have resulted in convictions because of the person's role in killing others or conspiring to kill others.

A case that began in 2008 culminated this past week in a sentencing that will leave Jodi Arias behind bars for the rest of her life for brutally killing her ex-boyfriend. She is not eligible for parole.

Almost two years to the day, Boston bomber Dzhokhar Tsarnaev was convicted of all 30 counts for his role in the 2013 Boston marathon bombing working with his brother who was killed in a police shoot-out. He is awaiting the sentencing.

Former New England Patriots player Aaron Hernandez was found guilty this past week of murdering another player in 2013 and has been sentenced to life in prison without parole for that killing. He is just 25. He is also under investigation for connection to another murder.

A week ago a man was arrested in an FBI sting for planning a suicide bombing attack at Fort Riley in Kansas. Fortunately they caught him before he could carry out his plans.

These kinds of activities are going on daily, around the world. And they are not new. They have been happening for centuries. We even find conspiracy to murder in our text today. How does Jesus respond to such news, especially when the conspiracy is against Him? Turn in your Bibles to Luke 13:31-35. Jesus shows us that God's sovereign plan was at work and it will continue to be at work. Nothing can thwart it not even the plans of man.

Consider first a warning for Jesus.

I. A WARNING FOR JESUS – v. 31

Within this verse we notice a covert plan.

A. A Covert Plan – v. 31a

We may read this verse and get the impression that these Pharisees have developed a soft spot for Jesus. After all they are warning Him about a plot by King Herod to kill Him. It seems like a very decent act on their behalf, like when Paul's nephew came and told the Apostle while in jail that the religious leaders were conspiring to lay a trap for Paul to kill him. It seems inconceivable that someone would want to kill Jesus, but here it is in black and white. Sure, there were some Pharisees like Nicodemus and Joseph of Arimathea who were followers of Jesus, but most of them hated Him. Was this genuine concern or deception?

Let's remember that the Pharisees hated Jesus. He is no stranger to death threats. From His birth there were attempts to kill Him.

King Herod's father, Herod the Great, attempted to murder Jesus as an infant when he was told by the traveling Magi about the birth of the king.

Throughout His three year ministry, the religious leaders were outraged at His teachings, which in their opinion, undermined their own teaching. He healed on the Sabbath, which in their opinion violated the Law. He claimed to forgive sins, an act they considered to be blasphemous because it put equal to God.

“For this reason therefore, the Jews (religious leaders) were seeking all the more to kill Him, because He not only was breaking the Sabbath, but also was calling God His own Father, making Him equal with God.” (John 5:18)

After the first time Jesus spoke in the synagogue at His hometown of Nazareth, they wanted to throw Him off a cliff because He called them spiritually

poor, blind, captive and oppressed.
Luke 4:16-30

When you go down and visit the Creation Museum, that they have armed guards stationed outside during the day. Last fall I was at the Pastor's conference and whenever the founder and president, Ken Ham, spoke there were armed guards in the back and by the stage because he has received death threats. People don't like the truth of God's Word he is proclaiming.

Jesus was no stranger to death threats.

John Phillips writes "they had snubbed Him, sneered at Him, and slandered Him. Now they tried to silence Him."

Their warning wasn't to protect Jesus from imminent danger at the hands of Herod. They were hoping two things would happen. They wanted Him back in the region of Judea near Jerusalem where the Sanhedrin could have a closer watch on His activities because it was their intent to put Jesus to death. Not that they wouldn't have been happy to have Jesus killed, but they felt they had justifiable legal and religious reasons. It was their opinion that He had violated the religious law and deserved to die.

A second reason for their warning was an attempt to scare Jesus into silence. They hoped this might curtail Jesus' teaching ministry since He was so vocal and popular. They didn't like what He had to say. It was a similar tactic used against Nehemiah by Sanballat and Tobiah in trying to keep the Jews from rebuilding the wall of Jerusalem. They tried to scare them into stopping the work. Here the Pharisees tried to silence Jesus from teaching any more. They were covert about their plan.

The verse then speaks about a criminal act.

B. A Criminal Act – v. 31b

The Pharisees warned Jesus of a plot by Herod to kill Him. "You better leave town. The king is after you."

Most likely Jesus is in the region of Perea. It's the area east of the Jordan River and controlled by Herod. At the death of Herod the Great, the kingdom was divided between his three sons. His son Herod Antipas was given jurisdiction over Galilee and Perea. It will be during His trial that Jesus will be sent by Pilate to Herod when He learns that Jesus was from Galilee.

What Herod sought to do was nothing short of criminal. He wanted to kill Jesus. It was a premeditated act. Let me suggest several possibilities why Herod sought to kill Jesus.

He may have feared that Jesus might in some way retaliate for killing John the Baptist, the cousin of Jesus. This seems ridiculous considering Jesus had never previously shown any aggressive tendencies.

Herod was well aware of Jesus' supernatural power and at one point wanted to see Jesus perform some miracle. He may have thought Jesus would use that power to harm him.

Like his father, Herod may have wanted to protect himself and his throne from a possible uprising.

Finally, Herod may have feared that Rome might step up their military presence and put more severe restrictions on Palestine if riots broke out due to the increased numbers of people following Jesus who might instigate a rebellion.

Herod sought to kill Jesus. It was a premeditated act, an act forbidden by the 10 commandments, but that wasn't going to stop Herod.

Before we move on from this verse there is something that I would like for us to see and understand. It's about the sovereignty of God. We

get a glimpse of it in Jesus' response which we will look at in a moment. But here's the point. Jesus had no fear of either the Pharisees and their plans or Herod and his plot. His destiny was not in their hands, but in the hands of God. Scripture tells us that even before the foundations of the world were framed, there was already a plan in place that would bring Christ to the cross. He would not die by some other means. It was the will of the Father and Jesus, who said that He always did the will of the Father, could confidently go about His ministry knowing that nothing would happen to Him that was outside the Father's will.

Sovereignty simply means chief or supreme. Charles Ryrie defines it as first speaking of position, that God is the chief Being in the universe and then it speaks of power, that God is the supreme power in the universe. There isn't anyone above Him or equal to him. Because He is all powerful it ultimately means that God is in complete control of all things. Ryrie concludes that "God has a plan (Acts 15:18), which is all-inclusive (Ephesians 1:11), which He controls (Psalm 135:6), which includes but does not involve Him in evil (Proverbs 16:4), and which ultimately is for the praise of His glory (Ephesians 1:14)."

Wayne Grudem describes the sovereignty of God as having the power to do all His holy will.

We are reminded throughout Scripture both stated and implied that nothing is too hard for God. God will do what He decides to do because He is all powerful but it will never contradict His holiness. It was His holy will to redeem mankind through the death of His Son on the cross and there is no power on earth or in heaven that could alter that plan. Jesus had nothing to fear from man because God was in control.

Remember that. Nothing will happen to us that God does not want to happen to us. Nothing can happen to us outside His will. Jesus knew that neither

Herod nor the Pharisees could touch Him outside the will of God. That same sovereignty guides you and me. We can therefore rest confidently in the sovereignty of God.

As a teen, David was anointed to be king. On numerous occasions, Saul sought his life. But because God is sovereign and it was His will for David to be king, God kept him safe.

(Here are some passages on the sovereignty of God: Psalm 50:1; 66:7; 93:1; Isaiah 40:15, 17, Jeremiah 32:17, 27; I Timothy 6:15-16; Revelation 11:17)

The Pharisees gave Jesus a warning and the words of Sir Walter Scott are fitting for both the Pharisees and Herod.

Oh what a tangled web we weave,
When first we practice to deceive.

Let's look at how Jesus responds their warning.

II. A WORD BY JESUS – v. 32-33

In verse 32 Jesus first speaks of His plan.

A. His Plan – v. 32

Jesus speaks about the true character of Herod. He calls the man a fox. It was a derogatory statement. Greek scholar A.T. Robertson writes "This epithet for the cunning and cowardice of Herod shows clearly that Jesus understood the real attitude and character of the man who had put John the Baptist to death and evidently wanted to get Jesus into his power in spite of his superstitious fears that He might be John the Baptist *revived* (redivivus)."

Like a fox, Herod was a crafty creature. He was deceitful, destructive, and deadly. In spite of his true character he was powerless against Jesus. Jesus would continue on with His ministry plans unhindered. He would teach and heal and He would do so until He reached His goal. His life had a

predetermined plan, a plan that was to seek and save the lost. That plan would be carried out ending in Jerusalem where there He would allow Himself to be killed. But He would reach His goal. He would accomplish the plans that had been laid out for Him by the Father, the plans to redeem us.

Now, Jesus isn't saying that in three literal days He would arrive in Jerusalem and be done with His ministry. The phrase used here "today and tomorrow, and the third day" is a way of saying that everything He was to do would be completed. He would continue His ministry of freeing people from their physical and spiritual conditions until His ministry on earth was done. Jesus' goal was to do the will of the Father.

John 4:34; 5:30; 6:38

There was a plan and nothing would, nothing could alter it. While we're thinking of God's sovereignty let me remind you of Romans 8:28. If you know it, recite it with me. "And we know that all things work together for good to them that love God, to them who are the called according to His purpose."

Most of you know that for part of our vacation last week we took a little trip to Dayton to visit the Air Force Museum. Before we left I prayed for our journey that the Lord would keep us safe. Monday morning as we left our motel headed to the museum we missed a turn that wasn't real clear by our GPS and we ended up on a side street. We hit a piece of metal that sliced our tire causing a flat. We ended up spending the morning getting the tire replaced. BUT, we were all safe. The next time we travel I'm going to pray that we don't have any vehicle problems.

My point is this: don't be afraid of the fox in your life. There is nothing to fear when you are doing God's will because He is in control of your life. It may not be easy, but there is nothing to be afraid of. Jeremiah 29:11

It was God's plan for Christ to reach His goal. Let's be thankful that Christ reached His destiny. There was a plan, we also see His purpose.

B. His Purpose – v. 33

Some of you asked what our plans were for our vacation. Our plans included time in Dayton, time at home, and time north at my Dad's. We also told you our purpose. We were going to the Air Force museum, David would spend time with friends, and we needed to check on Dad since his back surgery. Oh and to have a little rest.

Jesus stated His plans and then gave the purpose. Embedded in this passage is His dying. It would be in Jerusalem that He would lay down His life, an act that would finish the work of redemption promised to Adam and Eve.

Mark 10:45

John 6:51; *10:15-18

Galatians 1:3-4

Ephesians 5:1-2

Titus 2:11-14

I Peter 1:18-19; 2:24; 3:18

I John 3:16

It's important for us to understand that this was His goal – to die for us that through our faith in Him and His finished work on the cross we could have eternal life. Herod couldn't alter that plan one iota. Jesus would continue to ignore the threat and maintain His course of ministry knowing that it would not end in Perea, but in Jerusalem where He would die "for surely no prophet can die outside Jerusalem!"

According to tradition King Manasseh had Isaiah placed in a hollow log and sawn in half.

In II Chronicles 24:18-22 we have the account of the prophet Zechariah speaking the word of God in judgment against Israel for their disobedience. In

retaliation for his prophetic word King Joash had Zechariah stoned to death.

In Jeremiah 26:20-23 we read about King Jehoiakim who murdered the prophet Uriah in Jerusalem.

The point that Jesus is making is that He had nothing to fear because it wasn't His time to die yet, but like other prophets before Him, He would also die in Jerusalem when it was His time. This is another clear proof of the sovereignty of God.

In His book *The Murder of Jesus*, John MacArthur writes "The cross is therefore the ultimate proof of the utter sovereignty of God. His purposes are always fulfilled in spite of the evil intentions of sinners. God even works His righteousness through the evil acts of unrighteous agents. Far from making Him culpable for their evil, this demonstrates how all He does is good, and how He is able to work all things together for good (Romans 8:28) – even the most wicked deed the powers of evil have ever conspired to carry out."

The purpose of Christ was to go to Jerusalem where He would die for our sins. Have you trusted Him as your Savior? He died for you so that you could have eternal life.

With that announcement, that word, Jesus then issued a woe.

III. A WOE BY JESUS – v. 34-35

Throughout the ministry of Jesus we see something very clear about His character. He is filled with compassion and we see that here.

A. His Compassion is Clear – v. 34

According to the International Standard Bible Encyclopedia, compassion is a feeling with and for others. It sees the plight of others and is internally

moved and motivated to act in some way on behalf of the person in need and so to help them out of their predicament.

The dictionary says it is feeling sorry for the suffering of another accompanied with a desire to help.

One of the Greek words used for compassion in the New Testament is *SUMPATHEO*, where we get our English word sympathy. Vine's Expository dictionary defines it as suffering with another.

Another Greek word too hard for me to pronounce is often used of the compassion Jesus had for others. It was used in conjunction with the various times He looked on the multitudes and saw their need or the suffering of an individual who had an incurable illness or deformity.

Matthew 9:36 "And when He saw the multitudes He was moved with compassion, because they fainted and were scattered abroad, as sheep having no shepherd."

Compassion is a character trait of God that is evident throughout the Bible.

It was His compassion that moved Him in the Garden to promise a redeemer for man's sin.

It was His compassion that moved Him to deliver the Hebrews from Egyptian slavery.

It was His compassion that moved Him to deliver Israel time and time again from the oppression of surrounding nations when Israel turned their back on Him.

The prophet Jeremiah reminds us that God's compassions never fail, they are new each morning because of His great faithfulness.

(Lamentations 3:22-23)

Psalm 86:15 "But Thou, O Lord, are a God full of compassion, and gracious, long-suffering, and plenteous in mercy and truth."

James 5:11 "The Lord is full of compassion and mercy."

In this passage Jesus speaks of His compassion for

Israel as a nation. He speaks of the tenderness that He longed to demonstrate to them illustrating from the familiar care hens had for their chicks. They may all sound alike to us, but the chick knew the distinct sound of the mother hen. When there was impending danger the hen would call out to her chicks for them to run under the protective care of her wings where they would be safe.

You may have heard the story about the man raising chickens whose coop caught fire. After finally getting the fire extinguished they began to search the rubble. They discovered one of the hens dead by her nest, her feathers scorched from the fire, but as they moved the carcass of the dead hen, out from under the body scurried several chicks chirping away. Though she did not escape the flames she had protected her young.

Jesus wanted to gather Israel under His protective care, but sadly they spurned His compassion and refused His tenderness. Notice their response to Him. It's a sad testimony, one that is being played out every day. "But you were not willing." Let that roll through your noodle for a minute. Sit and ponder the implications of that decision. Help was available. Hope was in reach and they turned it away. It was a conscious, deliberate decision, one they will live with for eternity.

This past week was the deadline for taxes. It's a day I don't think any of us look forward to whether we owe anything or not. Let's say you took your taxes to the accountant and after days of pouring over your financial information he came back and told you that you owed the IRS \$10,000. Now let's say that the accountant then went on to tell you that someone else had come into his office that morning and was willing to pay the IRS bill of any client, all they had to do was call him. But let's say after you hear the news that you shake your head and tell the accountant that you aren't willing, you would rather pay your own debt.

Jesus has made a way for us to be sheltered from impending judgment when He died and rose again, and He invites us to come under His protective wing. He calls to us to gather around Him for safety. But as we see, like the Israelites, many choose not to, they are unwilling. What a sobering word. They had the opportunity, but threw it away. Jesus calls to us and tells all who are burdened and heavy laden to come to Him so that He can give rest. He calls to you in your time of need and bids you to receive His protection. His compassion is clear, but because they were unwilling to come under His protection, His condemnation is just.

Verse 34 is a succinct history of Israel. In spite of God's compassion for them they refused to be obedient to God and rejected His prophets and ultimately was a rejection of Him. They were simply unwilling. His compassion will give way to His condemnation.

B. His Condemnation is Just – v. 35a

Because they had clearly rejected Him, He would reject them. This sobering truth is seen in Paul's letter to the Romans.

"For although they knew God, they neither glorified Him as God nor gave thanks to Him, but their thinking became futile and their foolish hearts were darkened." (Romans 1:21)

Three times we read in Romans 1 that because people rejected God He gave them over. He rejected them. Jesus says that because they were unwilling to come under His protection their house would become desolate. House refers to the Temple, the city and the nation. God would abandon them. Speaking of Jesus, John 1:11 says "He came to His own and His own received Him not."

The Message says "They didn't want Him."

It was a conscious rejection.

Think about that for a moment. He was rejected by the very ones whose sins He bore, the ones whose

debt He paid. It's no different today, Israel as a nation continues to reject Him and their condemnation will be just as it will be for anyone who rejects Him..

His compassion is clear.

His condemnation is just.

His coming is soon.

C. His Coming is Soon – v. 35b

Jesus is not just speaking about the day of His triumphal entry here when they would shout their hosannas. He wasn't saying that because of the threat from Herod He was going to go into hiding until He appeared in Jerusalem at the Passover where He would publicly present Himself as the Messiah. We know on that day they did receive Him with open arms and proclaim with enthusiasm "Blessed is He who comes in the name of the Lord." But it was short lived. Their shouts of praise turned to shouts of persecution. Their cry of excitement turned to a cry of execution.

Jesus has something else in mind here. He is referring to another day when He will return to Jerusalem. It is still in the future. There is a day yet coming when they will look on the one they have pierced. In verse 35 the word "see" refers to spiritual recognition. Though now the nation of Israel has chosen to reject Him as the Messiah and as a nation they remain blinded to Him, there will come a day when they will look on Him as more than just a political deliverer. They will see Him as the one who alone gives eternal life. They will see Jesus for who is really is and will confess Him as the Messiah. They will come to the same conclusion Paul did on the road to Damascus, that He is the Son of God.

Jesus is giving them a promise of future restoration that will come because of national repentance. This will happen when He comes again to claim the throne as His rightful place and Israel will look on the one they have pierced and proclaim "blessed is

He who comes in the name of the Lord." What is at stake is God's faithfulness to fulfill the promises He made to the nation of Israel.

Isaiah 54:10 "For the mountains may be removed and the hills may shake, but My loving kindness will not be removed from you, and My covenant of peace will not be shaken," says the Lord who has compassion on you."

Jeremiah 31:35-37 "Thus says the Lord, who gives the sun for light by day and the fixed order of the moon and the stars for light by night, who stirs up the sea so that its waves roar; the Lord of hosts is His name: 'If this fixed order departs from before Me,' declares the Lord, 'then the offspring of Israel also will cease from being a nation before Me forever.' Thus says the Lord, 'If the heavens above can be measured and the foundations of the earth searched out below, then I will also cast off all the offspring of Israel for all that they have done,' declares the Lord."

Hosea 3:4-5 "For the sons of Israel will remain for many days without king or prince, without sacrifice or sacred pillar and without ephod or household idols. Afterward the sons of Israel will return and seek the Lord their God and David their king; and they will come trembling to the Lord and to His goodness in the last days."

Romans 11:25-26 "For I do not want you, brethren, to be uninformed of this mystery – so that you will not be wise in your own estimation – that a partial hardening has happened to Israel until the fullness of the Gentiles has come in; and so all Israel will be saved; just as it is written, 'the deliverer will come from Zion, He will remove ungodliness from Jacob.'" (Zechariah 12:9-10; 13:1, 8-9; 14:9-11)

What Jesus says is clear. He is compassionate on those who come to Him. What He does is just. There will be condemnation for those who reject Him. When He will return is soon. Will you be ready to welcome Him or will He find that you rejected Him? "blessed is He who comes in the name of the Lord."