

Christian Responsibility

2-24-2013

Luke 13: 31-35

31 At that time some Pharisees came to Jesus and said to him, "Leave this place and go somewhere else. Herod wants to kill you." 32 He replied, "Go tell that fox, 'I will drive out demons and heal people today and tomorrow, and on the third day I will reach my goal.' 33 In any case, I must keep going today and tomorrow and the next day--for surely no prophet can die outside Jerusalem! 34 "O Jerusalem, Jerusalem, you who kill the prophets and stone those sent to you, how often I have longed to gather your children together, as a hen gathers her chicks under her wings, but you were not willing! 35 Look, your house is left to you desolate. I tell you, you will not see me again until you say, 'Blessed is he who comes in the name of the Lord.' "

Jesus has called us to love our neighbors as ourselves, but all too often we let the social boundaries and borders of the world divide us. We build up walls instead of bridges; we keep people out who need to be invited in. We have a responsibility to care for one another as Christ cares for us, and yet we often fail to do it. That is the beginning of the call to worship Dennis had this morning. And it rings so true we very often fail to hear it. There are two great responsibilities we have as Christians; the first is the Christian responsibility we have as to ourselves; the second is the Christian responsibility we have to others.

Our scripture lesson this morning is not one most of us are very familiar with. Yet, as we study it, the passage invites us as Christians today to reflect on the meaning of Jesus' life and death and on the role we play in the continuing mission of Jesus. If we plan to continue that role, we must first understand what it is. Let's look at our lesson for a moment. In verse thirty-one, we read: ³¹ **At that time some Pharisees came to Jesus and said to him, "Leave this place and go somewhere else. Herod wants to kill you.** If you are like me, you always thought Jesus disliked all Pharisees, and thought all Pharisees disliked Jesus. There are several schools of thought on this particular verse. Some say that the Pharisees wanted Jesus to leave because they recognized that he was indeed someone special. They didn't necessarily believe he was the Messiah, but they recognized something special in him. They were afraid of the ramifications of what may happen to them if this Man were killed while in Galilee. The other school of thought is that there were actually some Pharisees who thought that he was the Messiah. We don't know how many, but some Pharisees did come to Jesus to warn Him. Herod is after you. He plans to kill you. You need to leave here, you need to go now. And how did Jesus respond: ³² **He replied, "Go tell that fox, 'I will keep on driving out demons and healing people today and tomorrow, and on the third day I will reach my goal.'** Obviously Jesus was not afraid of Herod. Jesus had a mission to perform here on earth. Jesus knew why He was here. Tell Herod I have a purpose. Tell him I'm going to keep on doing what I was sent to do. I'm going to help humanity. God is on my side. Jesus was in Galilee when this was taking place. He had not yet reached Jerusalem. Jesus knew that's where He had to go in order to fulfill the prophecies. **and on the third day I will reach my goal.** Jesus knew He would be crucified and rise from the dead on the third day, and He knew it had to happen in Jerusalem. We know that is what had to happen. Just a couple of weeks ago we talked about the Transformation and Jesus talking with Moses and Elijah on the mountain. And part of that conversation was how He, Jesus, had to go to Jerusalem and what the prophecies told would happen. In verse 33 Jesus says: ³³ **In any case, I must press on today and tomorrow and the next day—for surely no prophet can die outside Jerusalem!** What's He telling them? Hey guys, don't worry. I'm not staying here, I'm on my way to Jerusalem. I can't do what I was sent to do if I stay in Galilee. Don't worry, I'm on my way, but while I'm on the way, I am going to keep on preaching and healing. From that day until He was to be crucified, Jesus would keep preaching, teaching, and healing. Jesus had a mission; to preach, to teach, to heal, and to save humanity from sin.

Listen to verse 34: ³⁴ **“Jerusalem, Jerusalem, you who kill the prophets and stone those sent to you, Jerusalem the city. Jerusalem is probably considered to be the most holy city in the world, yet, look at its history. How many wars have been fought in and over Jerusalem and what it stands for. Jerusalem is the holiest of cities to the Jewish culture, yet that is where the religious leaders of the day rejected the Son of God. Look at the number of Christians who flock to the holy city just to be where Jesus Christ was crucified. Every time God sent someone to Jerusalem to warn the Israelites that something was going to happen or that they needed to change their ways, the people of Jerusalem ran them off or killed them. Several of the prophets were stoned to death in Jerusalem. And now we have Jesus Christ on his way to Jerusalem where He knows He will die. Jesus said **Jerusalem, Jerusalem, you who kill the prophets.** Now we all know that Jerusalem is a city and that cities cannot kill people. But the people in the cities, the political factions, and yes, even the religious factions within a city can kill people. Remember, it was the religious order who turned Jesus over to Pilot. People can and do reject others in their city. How many times did God send someone to Jerusalem to help the Jews? And here once again, God is sending someone to Jerusalem. Only this time, He is sending His Son. And what does Jesus say: **how often I have longed to gather your children together, as a hen gathers her chicks under her wings, and you were not willing.** How many times did God try to save Jerusalem? Probably more times than are actually listed in the Old Testament. And here God goes again. He is sending His son, Jesus Christ into Jerusalem to try and save mankind. And Jesus is going willingly. I love the symbolism in this verse. How many of you grew up in the country and raised chickens. I know we did. Well, actually, it was grandmother who raised the chickens and we just lived beside her. Grandmother had chickens for two reasons; one for the eggs; and two, to raise more chickens for food. I can remember seeing the old mother hen corralling her brood of chicks under her wings to keep them safe, to protect them. I can also remember getting too close to the old mother hen and being run away. It didn't take long to realize that you didn't mess with a mother hen. She could be a force to be reckoned with. Isn't that also a picture of God through His son Jesus Christ; someone who is surrounding us with his love, His light, His protection, His guidance. Time and time again, God sends prophets to us and time and time again we reject them.**

Our scripture passage today is very fitting for this, the second Sunday in Lent. It invites us as Christians to reflect on the meaning of Jesus' life and death and on the role we play in the continuing mission of Jesus. Earlier today I said Jesus had a mission; to preach, to teach, to heal, and to save humanity from sin. Jesus passed that mission on to us. That mission is our mission as well. And that mission, ladies and gentlemen, is our Christian Responsibility. Let's go back to Matthew 28: 19-20, we call these two verses the Great Commission, Jesus said: **Therefore go and make disciples of all nations, baptizing them in the name of the Father and of the Son and of the Holy Spirit,** ²⁰ **and teaching them to obey everything I have commanded you...** let's listen to that last section again: to obey everything I have commanded you... I started this morning's sermon by saying there are two great responsibilities we have as Christians; the first is the responsibility we have as Christians to ourselves; the second is the Christian responsibility we have to others. Just what type of responsibility do we have to ourselves? Habit seven of Steven Covey's 7 Habits of Highly Effective People is called "Sharpen the Saw". What it basically says is that in order to be effective as people, we must take care of ourselves. He says there are four basic areas within our lives that we must balance and continue to work on. Those four areas are: physical, spiritual, social, and emotional. No one area is more important than the other. It takes a balance in all four areas of our lives to function properly and effectively. Covey uses the analogy of a stool to illustrate his point of balance in our lives. If I take this stool and all four legs are the same length, all four legs are fastened properly to the seat, if all four legs are just as sturdy, and all four legs are fastened together properly, I can sit on this stool with no problems. But let one leg be missing, or too long, or too short, or too weak...well, would you want to sit on it? Our lives are just like that stool. We must be balanced in all four areas, physically, spiritually, socially, and emotionally in order to be effective as people. In 1 Corinthians 6:19-20 the Apostle Paul is talking to the church in Corinth and makes this statement: **Do you not know that your bodies are temples of the Holy Spirit, who is in you, whom you have received from God? You are not your own;** ²⁰ **you were bought at a price. Therefore honor God with your bodies.** In other words, take care of yourselves. If you are not balanced in all four areas, you will have trouble with the second part of our Christian responsibility, the responsibility we have to others. In Mark 12:30-31 we read, ³⁰ **Love the Lord your God with all your heart and with all your soul and with all your mind and with all**

your strength. ³¹ **The second is this: ‘Love your neighbor as yourself.’ There is no commandment greater than these.”** The chief priest, the elders, and the teachers of the law are questioning Jesus about His authority to teach, preach, and heal. They have asked him a number of questions trying to trick him and finally ask Him which of the commandments is the two greatest; and his answer; love God, and love your neighbor. Over the past several months, I have made it a point to talk about our duty as Christians to emulate Jesus Christ to the best of our abilities. I have also talked about our being the hands and feet of Jesus and carrying his mission to the people of today. That is part of our Christian Responsibility to others.

Today is the second Sunday of Lent. Lent, a season of reflection; a season of looking at ourselves and at our personal relationship with Jesus Christ. Over the next several weeks we will read scriptures and study how the religious leaders, the Sadducees, the Pharisees, the chief priest and elders saw Jesus as a threat to their way of life. We will talk about how they were resistant to change. We will talk about how they set themselves up as the righteous and how everyone else was supposed to bow down to their laws and rules. We will see how they were willing to crucify one of their own because He was willing to break down social boundaries. Jesus willingly walked with, talked with, ate meals with people like tax collectors, lepers, prostitutes, Gentiles, Samaritans. Jesus built bridges between all peoples, all races, all religions. Jesus Christ was and is open to everyone. It is our Christian Responsibility to be the same.

Last week our morning message was about resistance to temptation. This week we are talking about our responsibility as Christians. Over the next four weeks, we will be talking about trust, repentance, forgiveness, and faithfulness. As we journey toward the cross, we need to be ever mindful of who we are and who we should be trying to emulate. As I was doing research for today’s sermon I ran across this quote from Rev. David Smith, an Episcopal minister in a sermon he delivered in March 2007 titled “The Sarcasm of Jesus”. And I quote: “It doesn’t take much to twist genuine faith into something sick and destructive. I look at the people of the Old Testament. There was a fine line between their unshakeable faith in the God who would never let His holy city be violated, and their fatuous optimism in the face of their own sinfulness. It doesn’t take much to turn a blessed assurance in God’s love for us into a horrible arrogance for people who have not experienced such grace. It’s not a big move, to go from standing up for what you believe to trying to smash down those who don’t agree with you. How do we prevent these fundamental elements of our faith - our assurance and hope from becoming the basis of arrogance, prejudice and even violence?” End quote. How do we prevent this from happening? It’s actually an easy answer: Love our neighbors as we love ourselves. During this Lenten season, let’s tear down the boundaries, the borders and the walls. Let’s build the bridges of love, the bridges our Lord Jesus Christ asked us to build.