

Second Sunday in Lent

Grace, mercy and peace are yours because of the determination of your Lord to defeat all your enemies! NIV Luke 13: 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!

Prayer: Lord God Almighty, we humbly ask you to forgive our sins and bless us with a willing heart and a determined mind to use your powerful Word regularly. We ask these things for our sake and for our loved ones that we might all praise you forever in paradise!

Introduction: Facts are stubborn things; and whatever may be our wishes, our inclinations, or the dictates of our passions, they cannot alter the state of facts and evidence. (John Q. Adams, 6th president of the U.S.)

Ronald Reagan and Mark Twain both stole from Pres. Adams when they said, "Facts are stubborn things." There's good and bad when it comes to being called stubborn. If you are correct and on the right path, heading in the right direction toward the correct goal – Being stubborn, resolute and unwavering from that path is a sign of greatness! On the other hand without the facts, the right path, the correct goal, the proper direction, stubborn is just well... another way of calling someone a fool. Stubborn and stupid is a terrible combination.

This morning we see in clear focus the determination and commitment our Lord exhibited in reaching the goal of our salvation: His death and resurrection! At the same time we also see clearly the stubborn stupidity of hard headed and hard hearted sinners, as they follow their own path, their own goal and suffer foolishly and well...needlessly as Jesus Christ is the Savior of the world and was always committed and is still committed to saving sinners.

"Commit to the Lord whatever you do and your plans will succeed." (Proverbs 16:3)

1. Remember the determined commitment of Jesus Christ to reach his goal
2. Repent of your stubborn stupidity to go the wrong way.

Part 1. Some Pharisees came to Jesus during his time of preaching and teaching about the Kingdom of God. They seem to be threatening him or at best don't believe that he is the Son of God. "Leave this place and go somewhere else. Herod wants to kill you."

I can't seem to come to a conclusion as to what's going through the minds of these Pharisees. Are they secret supporters of Jesus, like Nicodemus and Joseph of Arimathea and really worried that Jesus is going to be injured like John the Baptist was imprisoned and beheaded by Herod Antipas? Probably not. Are they threatening Jesus to leave their area or else? Probably not. Are they trying to get Jesus to Jerusalem where the rest of their evil bunch will have more supporters to arrest him and get rid of him once and for all? Probably.

In any case they are telling Jesus where he should go. They are talking as if Jesus can be threatened, overpowered, cornered and so to speak, checkmated. They do not know who they are talking to. Hear Jesus powerful, amazing and comforting words again, "'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.' In any case, I must keep going today and tomorrow and the next day-- for surely no prophet can die outside Jerusalem!

Jesus shows no fear. He cowers to no man, king or emperor. He gives Herod Antipas no respect. He calls him a fox publicly. In those days there was no freedom of speech. The story of John the Baptist shows us what Herod Antipas did to people who didn't speak kindly about him and his life. John the Baptist was imprisoned and ultimately beheaded because he called a spade a spade. He called Herod a sinner for his relationships outside of marriage to his brother's wife, Herodias. But Jesus shows no fear and with total composure tells them that he will accomplish his goal. Herod Antipas or anyone else will not deter him from driving out demons, healing people today tomorrow or until the 3rd day when he will reach his goal.

What a powerful statement, "On the 3rd day I will reach my goal." Did he just say that? Are you serious? Did Jesus just say that to them? He sure did. It brings a chill down my spine to read these words. This wasn't the first time that Jesus told his disciples about the third day reaching his goal and rising from the dead: NIV Matthew 17:22 When they came together in Galilee, he said to them, "The Son of Man is going to be betrayed into the hands of men. 23 They will kill him, and on the third day he will be raised to life." And the disciples were filled with grief.

These are the words of our Savior, who died for us more than that who rose from the dead for us. Can you feel his determination and commitment to sinners to the mission the way of the cross and the resurrection? He certainly does love us. And nothing kept him from saving us. The devil and his demons can't stop Jesus. He tells them where to go. Herod Antipas, the King of the region, cannot keep Jesus from following his plan of preaching and teaching the Kingdom of God. The Pharisees with their evil; schemes to discredit Jesus, arrest him, torture him and even killing him cannot keep him from his goal! Jesus Christ was determined and committed to dying for the sins of the world and rising from the dead for the justification of all sinners!

Commitments change in our life, right? From dating someone to being boyfriend and girlfriend, commitments change. And even to our children, friends and family and co-workers we all know that just because I make a commitment does not mean I will or can keep it. We all accept the fact that we our humans and we fail to keep our commitments. But not so with our God. He is faithful to his word and makes all his commitments. His determination and commitment to us cannot and will not ever change or be hindered in anyway. The goal of our salvation began in Paradise and it will come to an end in paradise! Just as he promised! Everything in between those two paradises will all work in concert with God's goal of saving sinners. That's his promise! That's his determined commitment to us sinners.

NIV Romans 8:35 Who shall separate us from the love of Christ? Shall trouble or hardship or persecution or famine or nakedness or danger or sword? 36 As it is written: "For your sake we face death all day long; we are considered as sheep to be slaughtered." 37 No, in all these things we are more than conquerors through him who loved us. 38 For I am convinced that neither death nor life, neither angels nor demons, neither the present nor the future, nor any powers, 39 neither height nor depth, nor anything else in all creation, will be able to separate us from the love of God that is in Christ Jesus our Lord.

Part 2. "Talking like that pastor you'd think everyone would be in heaven. After all no one can stop God's plan, right? So everyone must go to heaven." Sadly Jesus reminds us that as determined, committed and willing he is to save sinners by going to the cross giving up his life and rising from the dead, some people are just stubborn and unwilling. 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!"

The great plan the Lord laid out for the world also included an extra special plan for the descendants of Abraham, the Israelites. The Lord would bless them with his word and protect the plan of salvation through them. To the Israelites the Lord gave the prophets throughout the ages to keep his plan of salvation going. To the Israelite the Lord gave the Promised Land. To the Israelites the Lord gave the Savior born in Bethlehem. To the Israelites in Jerusalem Jesus came preaching and teaching the Kingdom of God. To the Israelites the Lord decided to die and rise again before their very eyes. Even after His resurrection it was to the Israelites that the Lord first sent his apostles and His spirit so that they might repent and be baptized for the forgiveness of their sins.

What tremendous special love and patience the Lord showed to them. Yet, Jesus says "I longed to gather you together...but you were not willing." It is difficult for me too imagine all the advantages and chances they were given to repent and follow the Lord, and still they were not willing to follow God's plan. They instead lived and acted as if they were calling the shots, as if they had knowledge and power and a plan that God didn't have or know about. They rejected the prophets God sent to them. They killed prophets stoning them and if tradition is right they even sawed Isaiah in half because of the Word of God. Now Jesus is staring them in the face telling them point blank the mission, the goal, that he will reach, the very resurrection from the dead for the sinners of the world and they foolishly against all the facts of God's Word say no –reject it and push him away. Stupid and stubborn is a terrible combination. Their hearts and minds were hard and they lived in stubborn refusal to believe God's Word and live according to it.

Jesus tried to get them to look at themselves and their surroundings so that they might realize that the direction they were going, the goal that they living for was wrong. In a sense he asked them look around you, how is your rejection of God's Word and His plan working out for you? How is going your own way and doing your own thing working out for you apart from God's Plan? "Your house is left to you desolate." Their life of pushing away God's Word and God's Plan lead them down a path that was a wasteland of emptiness. Not just spiritually but also physically, the Lord in his love sent them disciplined reminders that life apart from God's

Word and Plan brings nothing but eternal emptiness, a waste. After Jesus' goal would be completed of saving sinners on the cross and rising from the dead, in just a few short years the city of Jerusalem would be laid flat by the Roman army – 77 AD is the destruction of Jerusalem. What a waste. It didn't have to end like that.

There is nothing more heart rending for me than to see my children fight and struggle with all their might only to see them fail, time after time. I try to intervene, give advice, and help them to stop making the same mistakes. Yet it invariably happens, they ignore my words and do what they think or want anyway. I've come to realize that as a parent the biggest threat to the success of my children in this life and into the next is not some bad guys out there, this bad evil world or even the old evil foe, but the bad guy in there – their sinful nature. As Christian parents we work to protect our children from their own sinful nature that thrives on stubborn stupidity.

How often don't we stubbornly go our own way and live our own lifestyle apart from God's Word and God's plan for us, only to see it end in a waste of our time, our efforts and our whole life. As Christians, like the Israelites we have so many advantages, especially having the Word of God living and active among us that we know the facts of God's Plan, his Word and His promises. We know the facts that God keeps his promises, that God has forgiven us our sins, that God is protecting us, that God's laws are for our good and will be a blessing to everyone who follows them. Facts are stubborn. But with all those advantages how stupid are we to still stubbornly go our own way through life disobeying God's Plan and his laws when we believe they are for our good and lead us safely to heaven. What a waste. What needless suffering we endure.

NIV 1 Peter 1:17 Since you call on a Father who judges each man's work impartially, live your lives as strangers here in reverent fear. 18 For you know that it was not with perishable things such as silver or gold that you were redeemed from the empty way of life handed down to you from your forefathers, 19 but with the precious blood of Christ, a lamb without blemish or defect.

Let us remember the determined commitment of Jesus Christ to reach his goal of saving us. As we remember Jesus determination, let us also repent from our stubborn stupidity of living our own way and not on the facts of God's powerful determined committed love for us. Facts are stubborn! Let us live on the facts of God's promises and follow His Plan that we might not end in a wasted empty life but a purposeful life filled with blessings for ourselves and for our children.