

Prayer of the Day:

Almighty God, you see that we have no power to defend ourselves. Guard and keep us both outwardly and inwardly from all adversities that may happen to the body and from all evil thoughts that may assault and hurt the soul; through Jesus Christ our Lord, who lives and reigns with you and the Holy Spirit, one God now and forever. Amen!

Verse of the Day:

Jesus humbled himself and became obedient to death even death on the cross. (Philippians 2:8b)

Text: 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.’”

Sermon Text:

“The best things in life are free” or so the saying goes. Love, family, fulfillment, happiness. While I don’t disagree with the sentiment. I wonder if we have cheapened the indescribable gift that these things are and while it may be true that these things aren’t bought with dollars and cents, they do often take commitment and real work, even great personal sacrifice to keep them going. So maybe, just maybe the best things in life aren’t free! Instead, they take real determination and effort. That’s what we see in our lessons today. The world doesn’t make it easy for Jesus or any of His followers. In fact, He will have to pay the ultimate price for us, to forgive us, to save us from our sins. So, the best things in life aren’t free and neither are you!

Last week, we saw Jesus tempted by Satan in the desert. Oh, Jesus repelled Satan and sent him packing but there was an ominous line there at the end, “*When the devil had finished all this tempting, he left him until an opportune time*” (Luke 4:13).” Jesus didn’t just face three temptations in the desert and He didn’t just face temptation once in His life. It constantly came after the Son of God as He went about His work in this world. We see one of them in our lesson today.

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.”* I really don’t know if the Pharisees have good intent here or bad. Nicodemus and others do follow Christ and yet we clearly have the Pharisees often mentioned as the antagonist of our Savior trying to trap him in His words and overcome by jealousy that people respect and revere Him more than them. So are they really trying to warn Jesus, or just get rid of Him? My guess is that I would put it in the latter more than the former but it’s a guess and in the end, I suppose it ultimately doesn’t matter to this specific text.

What does matter is the temptation that was just laid at Jesus’ feet? It’s one that makes perfect sense. Avoid the conflict. Avoid the hardship. Deescalate the situation. It would be a shortcut, a way out, safety.

Have you been there as Satan slyly slithered up to offer something easier? Perhaps it’s the hard conversation about sin that should be had, needs to be had with a family member or friend

and you just keep putting it off pretending that there are better situations, better circumstances in life in which to have it but knowing full well that the perfect setting will never arise. Maybe we see the troubles and the struggles someone is having and instead of helping when we know it will be difficult and time-consuming, we call it someone else's problem. Or is it the ease with which we have settled into our own homes and beds from which we do not wish to pry ourselves on a weekend for church, we'll watch it online, or not at all. It's recorded. I'll get to it sometime ...

Ok, I'll fess up! I want life to be easy and for some reason, everything seems to be more and more of a struggle. Shortcuts, the easy route, at least one fork in the road somewhere should allow for that right? What did Jesus say? *"If anyone would come after me, he must deny himself and take up his cross and follow me. ²⁵ For whoever wants to save his life will lose it, but whoever loses his life for me will find it. ²⁶ What good will it be for a man if he gains the whole world, yet forfeits his soul? Or what can a man give in exchange for his soul?"* (Matthew 16:24-26) Turns out the cross comes before the crown. Jesus knew that and He was determined in His resolve to save us.

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.'"*

Our Savior, He will not be run off by fear nor will he run away from an earthly puppet king. Instead, He makes demons run and chases away illness and ailment. Still, simple earthbound bravado is not the point of his coming.

There is plenty of argument out there about the three days that Jesus talks about here but I simply can't look past the fact that on the third day the goal is reached! Oh, it's not easy nor free. You see Jesus knows Herod won't kill him now. He knows it because His death is all laid out and perfectly planned. It has to happen in Jerusalem not because of its history but because of the promise. Those words will be heard on none other than Palm Sunday as the crowds cheer the arrival of the one they expect to make life easy again. *Hosanna in the Highest!! 'Blessed is he who comes in the name of the Lord.'* *Hosanna in the Highest!!* will ring through the streets just days before the howls of "crucify" overtake them. In the hands of the palace guard, the roman soldiers, Herod too, Jesus will not run, deescalate or take any shortcuts. No cross, no crown so He will endure the cross for us all. His will be the one we deserved for all the times we took shortcuts, remained silent, sought the easy way over the one God had laid out for us. Because He remains determined our sins are crushed, paid for, forgiven. "Tetelestei" ("It is finished") will be the cry that announces the work done, the empty tomb the promise that the goal is reached, accepted by God, given to you! Because He lives, we live eternally with God in the promise made reality, in the never-ending perfection of heaven.

"The best things in life are free" or so the saying goes. Love, family, fulfillment, happiness. While I don't disagree with the sentiment. I wonder if we have cheapened the indescribable gift that these things are and while it may be true that these things aren't bought with dollars and cents, they do often take commitment and real work, even great personal sacrifice to keep them going. So maybe, just maybe the best things in life aren't free! Instead, they take real determination and effort. But their worth it!

Thanks be to God for our Savior Jesus! Who overcame one temptation after another, remained determined to give us the very best, forgiveness and the manifold blessings that come through it. Frankly, it cost him all the things we so often are not willing to pay. But then, **THE BEST THINGS IN LIFE AREN'T FREE AND NEITHER WERE YOU! Amen!!**