

The title for today's message is: **Jesus Last Journey to Jerusalem**

The Pharisees said to Jesus: ***“Get away from here, for Herod wants to kill you.”***

Grace and peace to you from God the Father and our Lord Jesus Christ. Amen.

Our text begins with some Pharisees telling Jesus to leave Galilee at once because Herod wanted to kill Him, so they said.

But, what's wrong with that picture? I mean, since when were the Pharisees concerned about Jesus' well being? They too wanted Jesus dead.

So why would they warn Jesus? Well, we really don't know, but you have to wonder if they were telling the truth regarding Herod.

Maybe they said Herod wanted to kill Him to get Jesus to go to Jerusalem where the Jewish leaders were waiting to silence Him once and for all?

Or was Herod simply trying to have Jesus leave his territory. After all were told that Herod thought Jesus was John the Baptist come back from the dead.

Now, that was a scary thought for Herod, because he was the one who ordered John's execution.

None the less, Jesus was unfazed by it all. He said to the Pharisees: ***“Go and tell that fox, ‘Behold, I cast out demons and perform cures today and tomorrow, and the third day I finish my course.’”***

Jesus continues: ***Nevertheless, I must go on my way today and tomorrow and the day following, for it cannot be that a prophet should perish away from Jerusalem.***

Here Jesus was saying in affect, I'm not afraid of either of you. Why should he be, Jesus has the power to drive out evil demons.

Sure, Herod might be crafty like a fox, and he may have arranged John the Baptist's execution.

But that wasn't going to cause Jesus to change His plans. No! Jesus would continue to drive out demons and heal the sick, no one could stop Him certainly not Herod nor the Pharisees.

And as for the Pharisees? Well, they would get their shot at Jesus soon enough but not until Jesus was willing.

Look, Herod and the Pharisees were not the first to try to get Jesus to stumble and get off track.

Just last week we heard how Satan tempted Jesus. In one of those temptations, he showed Jesus all the kingdoms of the world, promising to give it all to Him.

The only thing Jesus had to do, was to worship Satan. Was this tempting to Jesus? No! Not for Jesus.

Thankfully Jesus treated Satan as he did Herod, and the Pharisees. Nothing, not even Satan was going to put an end to His ministry and His last journey to Jerusalem.

Where Jesus would die for the sins of the world. Why Jerusalem? Why was Jesus determined to go there?

First of all, Jesus had prophesied that He would die in Jerusalem, so it was important for Him to keep His word.

Jerusalem was also the home of God's temple, and the place where all sacrifices were to be made for the Passover.

Look, what better place for the Lamb of God to sacrifice His life for the sins of the world?

Ironic maybe, the name Jerusalem translated means "City of Peace." Jerusalem was anything but a city of peace that is how it treated the messengers of God.

Look, in our Old Testament lesson we heard how Jeremiah was persecuted there, simply for preaching the truth.

And tradition tells us that the prophet Isaiah, was killed in Jerusalem by being sawed in two.

Now Jerusalem would put God's own Son to death, yet in doing so, peace and salvation came out of Jerusalem by the death and resurrection of Jesus.

Although Jesus' journey to Jerusalem would bring peace to the world, it still wasn't appreciated by all.

As you can imagine, that made Jesus very sad. He said: ***O Jerusalem, Jerusalem, the city that kills the prophets and stones those who are sent to it!***

***How often would I have gathered your children together as a hen gathers her brood under her wings, and you would not!***

Like a hen that chases after her chicks to keep them from harm, Jesus had attempted to gather the people of Jerusalem under His protection, yet many refused.

Its very clear that people like the Pharisees, thought that they could get to heaven on their own and on their terms.

Others, like the unrepentant thief on the cross, just didn't believe and thought it was fun to mock Jesus. People haven't changed much have they?

A few years back, I asked a young salesmen what he would say when he stood before God's judgment throne. He said that he wouldn't say a thing.

He figured that God would accept him the way he was because he had been a decent fellow.

When I encouraged him to learn from the Bible what God would say to that, he declined saying that religion, especially Christianity, was too restrictive.

He was afraid that if he became a Christian, or even studied the Bible that it would take all the fun out of life.

I wonder if that isn't sometimes our take on God's Word? When we hear that Jesus wants to gather us as a hen gathers her chicks.

Is our first impulse to run the other way because we don't want to be controlled? If so, we aren't getting the picture.

When Jesus describes Himself as a hen that gathers her chicks under her wings, He's describing how He wants to protect us, not restrict us.

Perhaps the role Jesus plays as a hen can be best understood from this story. It's a story I always use when preaching this text.

After a forest fire swept through Yellowstone National Park a few years ago a park ranger went out to survey the damage.

As he walked through the woods he came across the charred carcass of a bird huddled at the base of a tree. It didn't make sense.

Why didn't this bird fly away to freedom when the fire threatened? When he nudged the carcass with his boot three chicks came scurrying out from underneath it.

Now it made sense. The hen had not flown away because that would have meant certain death for her chicks.

Therefore in an act of love she stood over her chicks shielding them from the fire with her wings even though it meant a horrible death for her.

My friends, that's what it means when Christ gathers us underneath His wings.

He stood over us on the cross and died a horrible death so we would not have to.

To think that Jesus wants to gather us to restrict our fun and freedom is absolute foolishness.

Do you think that it's restrictive to hang out in the basement when there's a tornado threatening? Of course not! It's the wise thing to do.

Even God's law that tells us what to do and what not to do is not as restrictive as you might think. The law is the secret to a happy life.

Life is much more enjoyable when we obey our parents, as we'll end up avoiding a lot of mistakes that they have made.

Life is a lot more peaceful when we remain faithful to our spouse, as we won't have to deal with marital strife.

Life is so much more worry free when we don't covet but remain thankful for what God has given us.

Look, God's law is like a guard-rail on a road leading up a mountain. The guard-rail doesn't restrict your car's freedom; it keeps it from going off the road and over a cliff.

If you have been tempted to put your relationship with God on the back burner until you get older, married, have kids, or retire, don't be foolish.

Trying God's patience by going out on your own is a dangerous thing. What do you think happened to any chicks that didn't want to find refuge under their mother's wing in that forest fire?

The same happens to those who refuse Jesus' refuge. Jesus said: ***Behold, your house is forsaken. And I tell you, you will not see me until you say, 'Blessed is he who comes in the name of the Lord!'***

Because the Jews rejected Him, Jesus pronounced judgment on them. In 70 AD their beloved house, the city of Jerusalem, was utterly destroyed by the Romans.

And those who died without faith will see Christ again, but only as their judge.

But for us, Christ is our mother hen who loves us, protects us and even died for us, so that we may have forgiveness and salvation.

Amen.

The grace of the Lord Jesus Christ and the love of God and the fellowship of the Holy Spirit, be with us all. Amen.