

Second Sunday in Lent

Sermon text: Luke 13:31-35

Philippians 3:17-4:1

Date preached: February 21, 2016

Sermon title: Jesus Heartfelt Desire

Jesus expresses a profound desire. He expresses a reality that what he wants to happen will not. “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.” There are people who are not willing to live under the shelter, joy, safety, love and truth of Jesus.

Why are some people unwilling to live with Jesus? As sinners living with Jesus means a very frequent refreshing or rebooting of our lives that the church calls repentance. Such a life with Jesus means turning away from our selfish behavior.

At the same time there are people who simply refuse to believe that what Jesus did is true. There are some who read the Bible the way one might read a book of children’s fairy tales.

The stumbling block to faith for the unbeliever comes down to the work of God on the cross. The Apostle Paul says it this way as recorded in First Corinthians 1:18. “For the word of the cross is folly to those who

are perishing, but to us who are being saved it is the power of God.”

There have been people of every generation, including eyewitnesses of Jesus who refuse to believe.

The Apostle Paul expresses this same desire of Jesus. Philippians 3:18-19, “For many, of whom I have often told you and now tell you even with tears, walk as enemies of the cross of Christ. Their end is destruction, their god is their belly, and they glory in their shame, with minds set on earthly things.”

One of the important things to understand here is that Paul is not referring to enemies of the cross of Christ as synonymous with evil people. The enemies of the Cross to which Paul refers are the non-believers, and for Paul those non-believers are not nameless other people.

They are people for whom Paul cares deeply. We are no different today in this respect. There are people we love deeply, whom we might label as good people, who do not believe in Jesus.

People who we might view as being lost are the very ones who have strayed from their confirmation promises. They are family members.

The good news is that God continues to seek out and search for the lost, the unbelieving. Jesus arms are open on the cross to draw people to himself.

Furthermore, after rising from the dead, Jesus formed the church to be about the work of continuing to tell the good news not just on Sundays, but each day of our lives.

One of the key words the church uses for sharing the gospel is Discipleship. Discipleship is about following Christ. The invitation is to model that for others. Follow me as I follow Christ. This is not to say that we are going to be perfect. In fact, we won't. We will sin.

What is different is that what we model when we do sin is that of confessing our sins to God. What we model is the work of repentance, in not only turning away from our sin, but turning to the places where we hear God's forgiveness. We hear it in the church and by church I'm not simply speaking of the building.

For Lutherans, we see in Scripture that the church is the body of Christ, people who gather to hear God's Word and receive the grace of Jesus through Word and Sacrament.

From this gathering, we go out making those amendments in our lives that we may live as Christ. The work of imitating Christ is the work of the Holy Spirit in your life.

Remember, it is the work of God—Father, Son and Holy Spirit who transforms us into a new creation. You who believe have been transformed through the power of the Holy Spirit. This same power that transformed your life has the power to transform the lives of the unbelieving.

Philippians 3:20-21 reads, "But our citizenship is in heaven, and from it we await a Savior, the Lord Jesus, who will transform our lowly body to be like his glorious body, by the power that enables him even to subject all things to himself."

The remarkable nature of God at work is that He uses us as disciples to bear witness to the transforming work of Christ in our own lives.

One of the things we can say about our own witness to those who would look at us with skepticism, highly critically or even accuse us of hypocrisy is that Christ continues to work in me. The Holy Spirit has not abandoned me, but continues to remind and reorient me Christ.

Romans 12:1 is not only a call to quote, “Do not be conformed to this world,” but it goes on to say, “be transformed by the renewal of your mind, that by testing you may discern what is the will of God, what is good and acceptable and perfect.”

A life of discipleship is a life long journey of bearing witness to the saving power of God in Christ, so that the ones we care for deeply and love with our hearts may come to believe. Yes, the Holy Spirit is at work. And the Holy Spirit will work through you! AMEN.