

A Divine Cry: When Jesus Grieved Luke 13:31-35

Introduction: These last few days have seen the news, social media, sports, and entertainment worlds unite in a common response: they all have recognized, remembered, and responded to the death of a world icon, *Muhammad Ali*. Ali (though out of his prime and popularity by the time I was born), was not only one of the most famous sports figures of all time, he perhaps was also one of the most recognizable people in the world, particularly in the 1970's and 80's. Hundreds of thousands, if not millions of people expressed their sadness at his passing. His death brought mourning to those who had met him, but mainly to those who knew him only from afar.

There is a difference between that type of mourning and grieving over someone who is intimately loved. There is a type of grief expressed in the sadness of loss, while there is a whole other category that has to do not only with **loss**, but **rejection**. It's the type of grief of a parent who gives everything to their child out of love, only to have that child reject counsel and live a self-destructive life on their own, all the while shaking their fist that they know what's best for themselves, when the door to come home is still open. This is the type of **grief, or lament, that Jesus expressed toward Jerusalem**, or His own people that He loved and desired to save, yet they still continued to reject.

Before we enter into this short but course shifting section in Luke, we have to take a look at some of the chronological realities of where this interaction took place. Luke 13:22-17:10 take place *in between* John 10 and John 11 (you should mark that in your Bibles). To understand where this conversation with "some Pharisee's" came from, we have to remember where Jesus was coming from. John 10 records Jesus in Jerusalem celebrating the Feast of Dedication (we call it Hanukkah, celebrating for 8 days the fact that oil burned in the lamps on the Temple Mount during the inter-testamental period). What is significant about that marker (John 10:22) is it gives us a time frame, knowing that the feast took place in *December*, which puts it about 3 ½ months out from Jesus entering Jerusalem on Palm Sunday.

In the narrative of John 10, Jesus' relationship with the Pharisee's in Jerusalem changed. Here Jesus claimed, unequivocally, that He and the Father were ONE (John 10:30). The response was immediate and clear: *they picked up stones to stone Him*. They accused Jesus of blasphemy (10:33), and Jesus reiterated that He did these works from the Father so that they would know that the Father was in Him and He was in the Father (10:38). After this, the text says clearly: *again they sought to arrest him, but He escaped from their hands* (10:39). He did so by going over across the Jordan River to the area known as Perea, which is out of the jurisdiction of the Pharisees and more importantly, the Sanhedrin (Jewish ruling body) in Jerusalem. It is here that Luke picks up the narrative of the narrow door (which we covered last week), and this interaction with the Pharisees.

A Plot of Inexplicable Motive (31-33)

At that very hour some Pharisees came and said to him, "Get away from here, for Herod wants to kill you."³² And he said to them, "Go and tell that fox, 'Behold, I cast out demons and perform cures today and tomorrow, and the third day I finish my course.'³³ 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.'

The Players involved

To understand why Jesus responded the way He did, we have to first understand the players involved in the discussion:

Herod Antipas – When Herod the Great died, the land he ruled over was split between 3 of his sons: **Archelaus** oversaw Judea, Samaria, and Idumea; Philip oversaw Trachonitis (Luke 3:1) and Iturea, which were northeast of Galilee; and Antipas who oversaw Galilee and Perea. It is Antipas who is mentioned the most in Luke. He ruled from 4 B.C to A.D 39, and though never gaining the strength of his father, still had power in the land. He was not liked by the Jews (shocking), in particular because he built a city called Tiberius on the shore of Galilee on top of a Jewish cemetery, which did not gain any points with the locals.

The other piece of information about Antipas: was an openly immoral man who carried on an affair and marriage to his brother Philip's wife (Mark 6:17-18). When John the Baptist heard about it, he openly rebuked the political leader, to which Herod responded by imprisoning John (Luke 3:20). Herodias, his mistress now wife, was angry and wanted John dead, but Herod refused out of fear of the people and the prophet (Mark 6:19-20; Matt. 14:5). In a night of folly and deception, however, Herodias had her daughter (from Philip, mind you) dance sensually for Herod, to which he openly declared a promise to give her whatever she wanted (his lustful response – Matt. 14:7). To this Herodias had her daughter ask for the head of John the Baptist on a platter (14:8), and Herod had to oblige for fear of shaming himself before his guests.

It is important to note Jesus' response to Herod. In Luke 9:7-9, Herod sought Jesus because he thought Jesus might be John raised from the dead, but Jesus did not allow a meeting with Him. As Jesus stood trial 3 ½ months later, Herod again tried to converse with Jesus, wanting to see a sign, but Jesus did not answer him at all (Luke 23:6-12). Herod could only mock and treat Him with contempt, but couldn't make Jesus dance the way he wanted to. This paints the backdrop for Jesus response to the news that Herod wanted Him dead.

Pharisee's – The second group were some of the Pharisees, presumably coming to Jesus from Jerusalem. Remember, they were livid that He would claim equality or oneness with God and believed it was their duty to deal with Him.

The Agenda's Being Served

Why would each group want an audience with Jesus? The stated reasons are obvious, but maybe not so obvious:

Herod: When Jesus heard that Herod was looking to kill Him, Jesus did not doubt it. But at this point Jesus broke normal protocol and called out the wickedness of this man. Herod thought he was all powerful and could control outcomes, but Jesus knew the truth. Herod wanted Jesus dead because He feared Jesus, viewed Him as a rival to His own throne, and what Rome would do if the people were stirred up. Herod was not interested in knowing Jesus, but getting rid of Him. So Jesus called him a **fox**, one who is *crafty and worthless*, which was the only recorded time Jesus spoke so harshly against a government official, and reiterated to him that Herod's agenda was secondary, powerless, and no match for Jesus.

Jesus used a Hebrew idiom or colloquial phrase that expressed **completion**, not literal days from then. To say today, tomorrow, and a third day was a way of saying *this absolutely will happen, and it will happen until it is complete*. Jesus gave a message back to Herod that said: you seek to kill me, but though I will die, it will NOT be according to your plan or your time table. Herod's agenda was man made out of fear, but Jesus transcends every human plan and selfish agenda.

Pharisees – Were the Pharisee's being magnanimous and trying to help Jesus stay away from death by Herod? Perhaps, but most likely this was their way of trying to lure Jesus back to Jerusalem. The Sanhedrin had no jurisdiction in Perea, so they could not legally touch Jesus across the river. If Jesus

would foolishly come with them, they could have Him arrested and the ball would get rolling on His trial. We know that they feared Jesus would take away their place and their nation (John 11:48), so their agenda was to silence Him. In sending a message back to Herod, Jesus also got His message to the Pharisees as well.

The Question Begged: *Who really killed Jesus?*

This may be a good spot to remember a fundamental and foundational reality of the death of Jesus. Jesus died at the hands of man who not only judged Him worthy of death, but ordered that His hands and feet would be literally nailed to a wooden cross. There is no doubt, Biblically or historically, that Jesus died at the hands of: **Herod Antipas** (Luke 23:6-18 – did not judge directly but unjustly punished Him and let the proceedings continue); **Religious Leaders** – Luke 22:66-71 who orchestrated the court proceedings and pressed Pilate with the threat of contacting Caesar (John 19:12); **Pilate** – John 19:15 Pilate, reluctantly, ordered Jesus' execution. **Jewish People** – Luke 23:20-22 – The crowd could have called for Jesus' release, but fearing their place within the religious leaders power and authority, called for His crucifixion.

So there is no dispute the role each played. However, historically the emphasis has been placed in the wrong realm. Whenever Jewish people have been indicted and punished for killing Jesus, there is a missing component to the story. Jesus died at the hands of man, but not by the authority of man. Jesus died with the instruments mankind could come up for a terrible death, but none of these had power suitable to overpower Jesus. Here is how Peter and the church in Acts explained who killed Jesus:

Acts 2:22-23 "Men of Israel, hear these words: Jesus of Nazareth, a man attested to you by God with mighty works and wonders and signs that God did through him in your midst, as you yourselves know-²³ this Jesus, delivered up according to the **definite plan and foreknowledge of God, you crucified and killed by the hands of lawless men.**

Acts 4:27-28 for truly in this city there were gathered together against your holy servant Jesus, whom you anointed, both **Herod** and **Pontius Pilate**, along with the **Gentiles** and the **peoples of Israel**,²⁸ to do whatever your hand and your plan **had predestined to take place.**

Note that in both of these, the human instrument of crucifixion is there, but ONLY to the extent that it accomplished God's plan. The human involvement was merely the *instrumental means* of Christ's death, while the **efficient cause was God Himself**. God was pleased to put Christ to death (Isa 53:10), not as a sadistic father but as a magnanimous redeemer. God, in His love and grace, planned that Christ would die before the world began, and Jesus faithfully saw it through, all the way to the cross.

"The Cross is therefore the ultimate proof of the utter sovereignty of God. His purposes are always fulfilled in spite of the evil intentions of sinners. God even works His righteousness through evil acts of unrighteous agents. Far from making His culpable for their evil, this demonstrates how all He does is good, and how He is able to work all things together for good (Rom. 8:28) –even the most wicked deed the powers of evil have ever conspired to carry out."¹

Why does this matter? No one took Jesus' life, no one had authority over Him, and no one's agenda trumped His. He laid down His life willingly, freely, and lovingly to please the Father and offer us salvation.

¹ John MacArthur, *The Murder of Jesus*, p. 7.

John 10:14-18 I am the good shepherd. I know my own and my own know me, ¹⁵ just as the Father knows me and I know the Father; and **I lay down my life for the sheep.** ¹⁶ And I have other sheep that are not of this fold. I must bring them also, and they will listen to my voice. So there will be one flock, one shepherd. ¹⁷ For this reason the Father loves me, **because I lay down my life that I may take it up again.** ¹⁸ **No one takes it from me, but I lay it down of my own accord. I have authority to lay it down, and I have authority to take it up again.** This charge I have received from my Father."

Jesus died for us because He chose to. He loved us so much that He was willing to place His life in the hands of impotent men and suffer and die. Everything regarding our salvation has to do with and is dependent on Jesus' loving determination to die in Jerusalem for His people, and us. His love could not be manipulated, thwarted, or deterred. His love for the Father and us meant He finished His task to completion.

But it also means that we can now see the works of man's hands in light of God's sovereignty. The disciples had a hard time seeing how Jesus dying could be redeemed, not seeing the sovereign pieces coming together. When we face circumstances, suffering, or even injustice at the hands of evil, even these things do not thwart God's plan. We can fight for joy, contentment, and determined love, even though we may never know the exact part of God's will that is being played out. Because Jesus determined to die, we can live in light of these:

2 Corinthians 4:7-10 *But we have this treasure in jars of clay, to show that the surpassing power belongs to God and not to us.* ⁸ *We are afflicted in every way, but not crushed; **perplexed, but not driven to despair;*** ⁹ *persecuted, but not forsaken; struck down, but not destroyed;* ¹⁰ *always carrying in the body the death of Jesus, so that the life of Jesus may also be manifested in our bodies.*

2 Corinthians 6:8b-10 We are treated as impostors, and yet are true; ⁹ as unknown, and yet well known; as dying, and behold, we live; as punished, and yet not killed; ¹⁰ as **sorrowful, yet always rejoicing;** as poor, yet making many rich; as having nothing, yet possessing everything.

It is trust, belief, and determined faith in God's sovereign hand that we can be *perplexed* by what is going on, but NOT DRIVEN TO DESPAIR, persecuted but not forsaken, and somehow sorrowful but always rejoicing. Why? Because the treasure we possess is powerful, even though it is contained in these earthen vessels, these jars of clay.

A Plea of Inexorable Compassion (34)

*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!*

Jerusalem's History of Violence

Here Jesus pauses to grieve over Jerusalem, the place of His greatest triumph and simultaneously greatest grief. He was going to a place that not only would turn their backs on Him, would call for His death, and would accomplish it, they did all of this as a generational habit. Jerusalem was not the only place that prophets were killed, but a primary and representative place.

2 Kings 21:16 Moreover, **Manasseh** shed very much innocent blood, till he had filled Jerusalem from one end to another, besides the sin that he made Judah to sin so that they did what was evil in the sight of the LORD.

2 Chronicles 24:20-22 Then the Spirit of God clothed **Zechariah** the son of Jehoiada the priest, and he stood above the people, and said to them, "Thus says God, 'Why do you break the commandments of the LORD, so that you cannot prosper? Because you have forsaken the LORD, he has forsaken you.'" ²¹ But they conspired against him, and by command of the king they stoned him with stones in the court of the house of the LORD. ²² Thus Joash the king did not remember the kindness that Jehoiada, Zechariah's father, had shown him, but killed his son. And when he was dying, he said, "May the LORD see and avenge!"

Jerusalem was designed as a place of worship, and had become a place of martyrdom. When God would graciously raise up prophets to call His people to repentance, they would turn against them and kill them.

Jesus' Desire to Gather His People

Despite this pattern, Jesus continued to show His graciousness. He compared Himself to a mother hen who desired to bring chicks under the safety and security under her wings. This is a favorite Biblical picture of God's care for His people.

Psalm 17:8 Keep me as the apple of your eye; **hide** me in the **shadow of your wings**,

Psalm 36:7 How precious is your steadfast love, O God! The children of mankind take **refuge in the shadow of your wings**.

Psalm 57:1 TO THE CHOIRMASTER: ACCORDING TO DO NOT DESTROY. A MIKTAM OF DAVID, WHEN HE FLED FROM SAUL, IN THE CAVE. Be merciful to me, O God, be merciful to me, for in you my soul takes **refuge**; in the **shadow of your wings** I will take **refuge**, till the storms of destruction pass by

Psalm 61:4 Let me dwell in your tent forever! Let me take refuge under the **shelter** of your **wings**!

Psalm 63:7 for you have been my help, and in the **shadow of your wings** I will sing for joy.

Psalm 91:4 He will cover you with his pinions, and **under his wings** you will find **refuge**;

Under God's wings there is refuge, mercy, help, covering, and joy. If you've ever observed a mother hen, trying to corral wild hens is difficult, but her desire is to keep them safe. We had a group of 7 ducks stay with us this last weekend, and though they were all related, they treated the small ones roughly. Jesus' heart was to gather His brood, but only if they were willing to come.

A Prophecy of Inescapable Judgment (35)

*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!'"*

The Coming Disaster

Because of the obstinate nature of the Jewish people, Jesus also gave a sure prophecy against them. Their house would be forsaken. Literally their nation, their freedom, and their house of worship would be taken away. Jerusalem, the center of the nation, was destroyed by Rome between A.D 68-70 when Titus razed the city walls. It was starved into submission and ultimately laid bare. Josephus quotes that more than a million people died in the revolt, and close to a 100,000 were taken captive (Wars VI. 9.3). By the end of the war, "roofs were thronged with famished women with babies in their arms, and the

alleys were filled with corpses of the elderly. Children and you were swollen from starvation and roamed like phantoms through the market places and collapsed wherever their doom took them.” (War. V. 12:3). **There is no neutrality with God. We are either under the protection of His wings or outside of it, which is a place and sphere of judgment. Outside His wings is a wild place, uncertain of anything except for inevitable destruction.**

The Future Appearance

Jesus mentioned a two fold prophecy of His appearance. The Pharisees would not see Him again until they uttered “Blessed is He who comes in the name of the Lord!” We know this happened and the hope we have: it will happen again. It happened as Jesus entered into Jerusalem riding the foal of a donkey and the people rang out (Matthew 21:9) with such a force that the whole city stirred. Yet, they were not willing to take Jesus on His terms, so though He offered Himself to them one last time, He left on Tuesday saying: you will not see me again until you say, “Blessed is he who comes in the name of the Lord” (Matthew 23:38). Why is this so hopeful? Because Jesus will return to judge, but also to draw back His hens before the end of redemptive history, and they will willingly come to Him.

What are the takeaways and implications:

- Jesus laid His life down for us, for His Father, out of love, so that He could draw us to Himself. No one took His life, and God works His will to completion even through the sinful actions and intentions of man.
- God desires to draw us to Himself, not in a forceful subservient way, but as a mother hen protects and secures her brood.
- God only takes us on His terms, not according to our own agendas or motives. We must believe and repent, asking God to forgive our sins through the work of Jesus on the cross, and turn from our sin to follow Him. In doing this, we enter safety out of danger, peace instead of conflict, and life instead of death.

Questions to Discuss:

What comfort do we derive from knowing no one took Jesus’ life, but He freely laid it down on His own accord? Why is that different than a Savior who died reactively at the hand of evil men?

What comfort do we derive from knowing that God’s will is not thwarted by evil men, evil intentions, or even circumstances? What is it about this truth that allows us to be sorrowful, yet always rejoicing?

God calls us to take refuge in Him, to abide in Him, and find joy in the security of His wings. How do we practically do that every day, but also when we face major trial, suffering, or the unknown future?