



CROSS TRAINING:
What price would you pay to get a (real) life?

Week Two:
Messiah's Mission Statement
Luke 13:31-35

Preparing for the Text

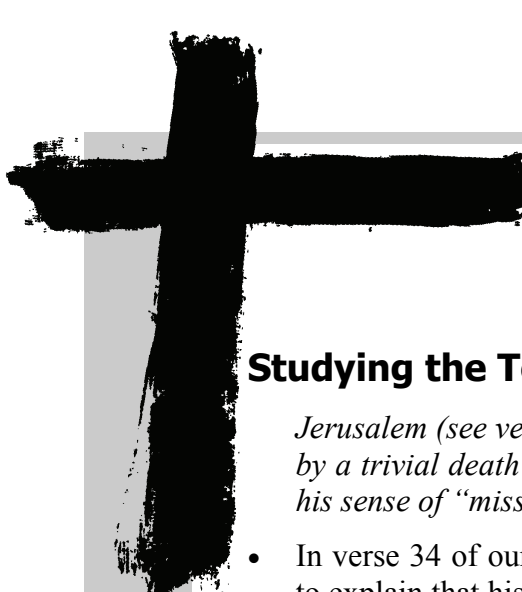
Knowing that our movement from the daily responsibilities of life to a Bible study may at times demand some careful transition, provide some time for your small group or class to prepare for a meaningful discussion by using one or more icebreaker questions like these:

- What is your earliest memory of being protected from real or potential harm by someone who was looking out for your wellbeing?
- As you pause to reflect on your experiences during this past week, who has served as a “guardian angel” of sorts, and what have they done to let you know that they “have your back?”

Studying the Text:

The Gospel text we will be studying for this second week of Lent comes at the conclusion of a chapter of apparent warnings as Jesus continues his intentional journey toward Jerusalem (part of what appears to be a “travel narrative” stretching from Luke 9:51 through 19:27). In other words, while Jesus is clearly resolved to make his way to Jerusalem no matter what the personal cost may be, he continues to issue cautionary warnings to others as a way of calling them to repentance. To put it simply, Jesus is not acting out some sort of macho “death wish” as he moves closer to Jerusalem. Knowing the dangers ahead, Jesus nonetheless seems to expect that there is still time for those around him to respond favorably to the offer of God’s salvation that he embodies. With this Lenten emphasis on the necessity and possibility of repentance in mind, take time to read the text of Luke 13:31-35 aloud with your group before discussing these questions:

- Although many will probably recognize that “Pharisees” (a prominent renewal or reform movement among the laity of Judaism during the time Jesus was engaged in his public ministry) often appear as critics and enemies of Jesus in our Gospels, this text indicates that at least some Pharisees were concerned for the Messiah’s safety. Presumably our text reflects a moment in which Jesus is traveling from Galilee (the region under the authority of Herod Antipas, a Jewish tetrarch or governor imposed upon the local populace by the military force of the Roman occupation) toward the holy city of Jerusalem, suggesting that the Pharisees in question are encouraging Jesus to keep on moving away from Galilee to escape Herod’s death threat. *How would you describe the way that Jesus responds to this warning from the Pharisees, given that he calls a dangerous ruling despot like Herod, “that fox,” while announcing that he is really too busy “today, tomorrow, and the next day” to be killed as a prophet in any place other than*



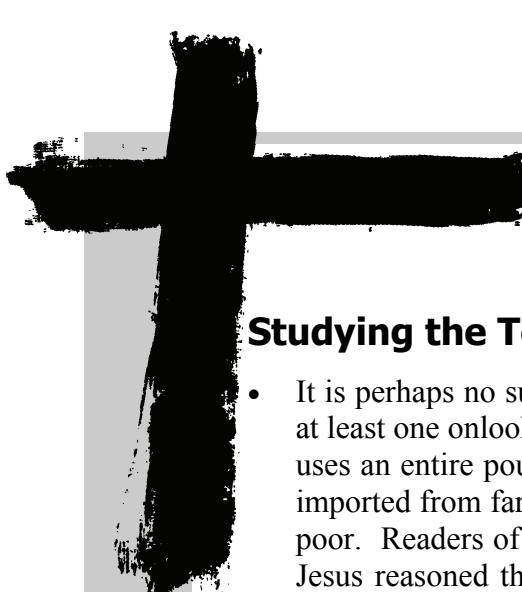
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Studying the Text (continued):

Jerusalem (see verses 32-33)? If Jesus truly thinks his work is too important to be interrupted by a trivial death threat from a ruler like Herod, what does this tell you regarding Jesus and his sense of “mission” or vocation as God’s Messiah?

- In verse 34 of our text, Jesus shifts his attention from Herod to Jerusalem, perhaps intending to explain that his continued journey to the capital city is not an attempt to escape from Herod but rather a final effort to call Jerusalem and the nation it represents to repentance before God. The form of this passage is a *lament*, as Jesus begins to mourn over the long, troubled history of Jerusalem which serves apparently as a symbol for the way humankind continually resists the salvation and righteousness of God. The Gospel of Luke is a good setting for this kind of anguished cry, for the city of Jerusalem is mentioned 90 times in this Gospel while it is only named 49 times by all of the other writers of the New Testament. Obviously, Jerusalem is a place of true concern both for Jesus and the storyteller who provided us with this Gospel of Luke. But in this particular lament, we can note that Jesus uses a rather odd and perhaps unexpected image in describing his desire to gather and protect the rebellious, resistant people of Jerusalem just like a mother hen would gather her brood under her wings (see verse 34). *What do you think of the way that Jesus has described his approach to ministry as a mother hen who would shield her chicks from danger by putting her own body between them and “that fox” who would come near to threaten the brood? How does this maternal image of a mother hen who protects and serves others by making herself vulnerable help you understand something new about the way that Jesus the Son of God insists on gaining our salvation by dying on a cross?*
- Despite the sober appraisal of Jesus who has been disappointed by the way the “children” of Jerusalem have refused to be gathered under his “wings,” our text still makes it clear that Jesus continues to issue his call for repentance. In verse 35, Jesus seems to be referring to the Temple of Jerusalem when he says, “See, your house is left [abandoned by God] to you.” Likewise, Jesus is perhaps anticipating his later arrival (the so-called “triumphal entry” into Jerusalem commemorated by Christians on Palm Sunday) when he promises that he will not be seen again by the people of Jerusalem until the Passover pilgrims shout their “hosanna” chant from Psalm 118: “Blessed is the one who comes in the name of the Lord.” And if this is the correct reading of our text, then it would seem that Jesus is asking the people of Jerusalem (and by extension, all of us) to conclude that he is, in fact, “the one who comes in the name of the Lord.” *What does it tell you to hear that Jesus keeps preaching, keeps calling for repentance from the very people who have so long resisted his approach as a mother hen who keeps seeking to gather her chicks under her wing? Does his urgent appeal for one last chance at repentance cause you to reconsider what can yet happen for some old circumstance or some unresponsive loved one for which you had previously determined that “nothing more can be done?”*



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Applying the Text:

As we have looked more deeply at the movement and imagery evident within this passage of scripture, there are perhaps three immediate points of application we may wish to consider. First, listen to the assurance and confidence of Jesus as he dismisses the death threat which has been reported to him. *Jesus is reminding us that only God holds final authority over our lives, and no matter how intimidating our adversaries may be, God will see to it that we will finish all of the work we are called by God to accomplish!* Second, we may wish to give attention to the “mother hen” image Jesus uses to describe his work and mission. As Barbara Brown Taylor puts it, “Jesus won’t be king of the jungle in this or any other story.” *Apparently, Jesus will not attempt to become like Herod to defeat Herod, and this may be a lesson for all of us given the way we are so often tempted to let the aggressive behaviors of others determine our own behavior.* And finally, in a text filled with real foreboding regarding the danger that awaits Jesus in the city of Jerusalem, it is still clear that *Jesus does not give up on any place or person in his vocation as the Messiah of God.* He keeps asking for, and expecting our repentance. If Jesus were not so clear-sighted regarding the willful resistance of the people who have “killed the prophets and stoned the ones God sent,” we could perhaps dismiss his call for repentance as unrealistic and crazy talk. But despite his knowledge that we continue to rebel against the reign of God, Jesus nevertheless continues to invite us to make a break with the past by allowing ourselves to be gathered again to the very heart of God. And if Jesus is willing to believe that repentance is still possible, who are we to disbelieve?

Praying the Text:

As we indicated in our first study session last week, each gathering of the class or small group during this Lenten worship series should provide an opportunity to receive focused and concentrated prayer as others “lay on hands” to intercede for those group members who are willing to ask for prayer regarding some issue or concern. Perhaps one of the three implications of our text identified above in the “Applying the Text” section of this study guide may serve as an encouragement for group members to seek a special time of prayer regarding some anxiety or intimidation being experienced at present; a proper and Christlike response to the cruel or damaging attacks of others; or for the fruit of true repentance and soul transformation in some area of concern that has been identified by the Spirit of God. Allow others to enjoy the privilege of serving in the “priesthood of believers” by praying for your need as Jesus encourages you to share it with your group.

Upcoming Cross Training Studies:

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| March 7, Week 3: | <i>Wasting Space and Borrowed Time</i> —Luke 13:1-9 |
| March 14, Week 4: | <i>A Brief History of God</i> —Luke 15:1-3, 11-32 |
| March 21, Week 5: | <i>Gospel Calculus</i> —John 12:1-8 |
| March 28, Week 6: | <i>Downward Nobility</i> —Luke 19:28-40 |
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