

Listening for the Promise

WEEKLY DEVOTIONAL

Second Sunday in Lent – March 16, 2025

“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 were not willing!
³⁵Behold, 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!’”

- Luke 13:34-35 -

Jesus and his disciples have been on a long journey from Galilee to Jerusalem. Their trip begins in chapter 9, verse 51 of Luke’s gospel. It is indeed a *long* journey. It would have been about 80 miles (129 km). Certainly, he and his disciples would have rested along the way. And as they sojourned through the desert, they would have stopped in towns as well. Throughout the journey, Jesus teaches those with whom he comes in contact. He shares parables, heals the infirm, and performs miracles. And even after all this, so many still reject Jesus as the Son of God. So many reject God’s promise of love and salvation. And as Jesus is making his way to the cross, this rejection pierces his heart, much like the Roman soldier’s spear would on Good Friday.

The verses above from Luke 13:34-35 illustrate Jesus’ lament over Jerusalem. He is deeply saddened, heartbroken even. Jesus expresses a deep sorrow and longing to gather Jerusalem under his protection like a mother hen gathers her chicks, but the city stubbornly rejects this offer, highlighting the tragic consequences of refusing God’s grace and love; essentially, Jesus weeps over Jerusalem’s impending judgment due to their unwillingness to repent and accept his message.

An article in the National Geographic several years ago provided a picture of God’s love for us. There had been a forest fire in Yellowstone Nation Park. Forest rangers hiked up a mountain to see and gauge the damage. One of the rangers found a bird literally petrified in ashes, perched statuesquely on the ground at the base of a tree. The ranger was rather grossed out as one can imagine. So, he knocked over the bird with a stick. When he hit it, three tiny chicks scurried from under their dead mother’s wings. The loving mother bird, aware of the impending disaster, had carried her offspring to the base of the tree and had gathered them under her wings, instinctively knowing that the toxic smoke would rise. She could have flown to safety but had refused to abandon her babies. When the blaze had arrived and the heat scorched her small body, the mother had remained steadfast. She had been willing to die, so those under the cover of her wings would live.

This is the kind of love and protection Jesus strives to preach about. He wants nothing more than to gather us unto himself, to protect us and save us from sin, death, the devil and all his empty promises. May we be reminded of the depth of God’s love for us as we continue through the season of Lent.