

## THE REJECTION THAT MATTERS – LUKE 13:31-35

PASTOR COLIN RIEKE ~ MARCH 1, 2015

<sup>31</sup> At that time some Pharisees came to Jesus and said to him, “Leave this place and go somewhere else. Herod wants to kill you.” <sup>32</sup> He replied, “Go tell that fox, ‘I will keep on driving out demons and healing people today and tomorrow, and on the third day I will reach my goal.’” <sup>33</sup> In any case, I must press on today and tomorrow and the next day—for surely no prophet can die outside Jerusalem! <sup>34</sup> “Jerusalem, Jerusalem, you who kill the prophets and stone those sent to you, how often I have longed to gather your children together, as a hen gathers her chicks under her wings, and you were not willing. <sup>35</sup> Look, your house is left to you desolate. I tell you, you will not see me again until you say, ‘Blessed is he who comes in the name of the Lord.’”



This is the day the Lord has made, let us rejoice and be glad in it,

She was the new girl in school. She was beautiful – her hair was a golden blonde, her eyes a vibrant hazel, and she had a smile that made you melt. Not only was she beautiful, she was athletic, and she was smart too, not one of those dumb blondes. She was in several of his classes – even his lab partner in biology. For weeks, he had been working up the nerve to ask her out on a date, a movie, a coffee, anything, just to spend more time with her. He had it all planned out. After the bell rang and let them loose for the weekend he would do it. The bell rang, and as everyone was rushing out of the classroom, he tapped her on the shoulder and said, “hi.” She responded affirmatively, and his confidence grew. “Would you...I mean if you’re free and all...want to go on a date with me?” She looked at him, what did that look mean? She parsed her lips and said, “That’s sweet of you, and you’re such a nice guy...but I can’t”

He had just been shot down, rejected by the girl of his dreams. Perhaps you know how this feels. Perhaps you’ve been on the other end when you’ve had to say “no” to someone else. Any way you slice it, rejection isn’t fun. It isn’t nice to get rejected – whether it’s for a date, for a school, or for a promotion. And while all of these rejections can be painful, there’s another rejection that carries with it more pain and sorrow, and that’s the rejection our Savior felt.

In part, this rejection was necessary, but that didn’t make it any easier to bear. Jesus spoke of this rejection a little bit in our gospel for this morning – the rejection of Jerusalem to God’s Word and God’s prophets. And yet it was not only Jerusalem which rejected him, but it was the rejection of all – you, me, the whole world. And it was our rejection of him which led him to THE REJECTION THAT MATTERS.

1. Not our rejection of him
2. But his rejection of sin

We turn the page on Jesus' temptation in the wilderness from last week and turn again to a stone that sought to do him damage, the stone of rejection. Jesus' temptation took place at the beginning of his ministry, and now we jump near the end of his ministry and he was getting closer to his ultimate goal of Jerusalem. It was in the region of Perea, today's West Bank, that some Pharisees came to Jesus with a warning. **"Leave this place and go somewhere else, Herod wants to kill you."** If this seems a little strange to you that the Pharisees want to help Jesus, you're right. This is about the only place in all of Scripture that the Pharisees seem to be looking out for Jesus' best interest.

Which leads us to assume there is more behind this warning than meets the eye. Jesus doesn't directly rebuke the Pharisees for lying to him, so there may have been some truth to the matter that Herod wasn't too fond of Jesus. But once again this was a temptation of sorts laid out by the Pharisees to Jesus. Remember the devil's first temptation of turning a stone into bread? Jesus responded by showing trust in his heavenly father. So also here, Jesus is not going to be swayed to adjust his schedule, to adjust his ministry based on a report from the Pharisees. Herod's rejection didn't sway him from his mission.

This leads to Jesus' response to the Pharisees, **"Go tell that fox, I will keep on driving out demons and healing people today and tomorrow and on the third day I will reach my goal."** Later Jesus indicates where this journey is leading him, where his goal is, **"I must press on...for surely no prophet can die outside of Jerusalem."** It was perhaps the Pharisees original intention for Jesus to flee the West Bank and get closer to the capital city, a place which was the heart of the Pharisees' influence and power. Jesus said he was going there, but not because the Pharisees or anyone else was driving him there, but because he was willing.

Now, you might think that Jerusalem of all places would be welcoming of Jesus, the Messiah. But Jesus' words come as a startling awakening. **"Jerusalem, Jerusalem, you who kill the prophets and stone those sent to you, how often I have longed to gather your children together as a hen gathers her chicks under her wings, and you were not willing."** Scripture only records a few instances of a prophet of God being killed in Jerusalem, but it alludes to many more. How far Jerusalem had fallen, from the city of David, the place of the Temple, to the center of opposition to God and his Word. Jerusalem's rejection didn't sway his love.

You can certainly see this take place when you read through 1 & 2 Kings, 1 & 2 Chronicles. Jerusalem, all of Israel and Judah for the most part abandoned the worship of the Lord, or what worship they did, they only gave lip service. Not only did some of the kings abandon the worship of the Lord, but they even erected statues of pagan gods in the Temple of the Lord and offered sacrifices to them there. It would be like a husband coming home to find his wife cheating on him in his own bed. Now, hopefully you have never had to experience rejection like that, and yet we can imagine how we might feel. It would be easy for us to justify any actions that take place afterwards – anger, sadness, disappointment.

Not only did God feel all of these emotions as he looked down upon Jerusalem over the centuries, but Jesus did also as he considered where his ultimate goal would lead. He would go to a place that would not truly welcome him, a place he loved dearly, to a people he loved dearly, and they would reject him. Now we might argue, it had to be this way, the Jews had to reject him to that he could accomplish his

mission. Yes that's true, but it didn't make it any easier to take, and it didn't make what they did excusable.

But it's not just the rejection of Jerusalem to their salvation that matters, it's our rejection as well. It can be so easy to pin the blame on the Israelites, the "bad" people of this world as those who have outright rejected Christ, but we must not forget who we are and what we've done. We have rejected our Lord too. In fact it was for our rejection he came too. Perfect people don't need a Savior, rejected ones do. It is true that we try to hide our rejection of our Savior, and we can do it so well. We can put on the disguise of a hardworking employee, a dutiful husband or wife, an energetic student. We can say the right things, know the right answers, and please the right people. But underneath it all we are hiding rejection.

Our rejection comes in the form of the secrets we keep from others, but could never hide from God. Our rejection comes in the form of flip-flopping on God's Word to satiate others. But most of all, our rejection comes in the form of our sinful nature – the one we were born with, the one we were conceived with. This is the most blatant rejection of our Lord. The once perfect image of God is corrupted with sin. And not just a minor corruption, not just a major corruption, but a complete and utter corruption. Even as Christians, we face our sinful nature every time we look in the mirror, every time we come to church, every time we kiss our children. And we are reminded time and time again, that we too have rejected our Lord.

But our rejection of him isn't THE REJECTION THAT MATTERS. But it's only after we realize that we've rejected him, that we can come to an understanding of THE REJECTION THAT MATTERS. Maybe our rejection of him is revealed when we finally get caught in our sin by someone we care about. Maybe our rejection of him is revealed in our own inability to cease and desist from a particular sin – be it gluttony, pride or immorality. And every time we turn to look at ourselves, Jesus says, "Oh you of little faith."

(2)

Because our rejection of him isn't THE REJECTION THAT MATTERS. Because the same Jesus who longed to gather the people of Jerusalem under his wings, wants to gather us under his wings too. And for that to happen, something had to change. We cannot shed our sinful nature, and yet it needed to be punished. But it still wasn't enough for Jesus to take that punishment, he had to give us something worth having. The only thing that would satisfy a just God would be a perfect life, a life that rejected sin. And that is precisely what Jesus did. THE REJECTION THAT MATTERED is his rejection of sin.

For as much as Jesus helped those living in this world with their sicknesses and physical needs, he was fulfilling the perfect life for our spiritual need. Last Sunday, we heard how he rejected the temptation the devil placed in his path. This is what he did throughout his life – a continual and constant reject of evil, and a turning to that which is good. His rejection of sin had nothing to do with how much we loved him. And by rejecting sin, he has assured us that he will never reject us, no matter what we do, no matter how we feel, no matter what we think.

His perfect obedience covers us as a hen covers her wings over her chicks, protecting them from all harm. We too are protected from all harm. But there still is room under his wings. There is room for

us to tell people of the REJECTION THAT MATTERS. This can be done in any number of ways, whether it's actively looking for ways to share the gospel, or whether it is through your own actions. We can do this, we must do this despite the rejection that we know is coming. We won't share the gospel looking for rejection, that will just come naturally. But Christ promised that what happened to him will happen to us – both the rejection and then the triumph.

Normally we don't think of rejection as a good thing. Rejection in dating, rejection in a job hunt, rejection to a school. Certainly our rejection of God falls in the category of "not a good thing." But despite our rejection to God, we can be confident that he doesn't reject us. His rejection of sin guarantees that. It is his rejection of sin which leads us to live our lives in imitation of him out of thanksgiving. And as we continue to struggle in our rejection of sin and being rejected by the world because of Christ, we can look forward to the day when Christ will return in triumph – rejecting those who rejected him, and not rejecting the ones he has chosen. Amen.