

Luke 13:31-35. ³¹ At that time some Pharisees came to Jesus and said to him, "Leave this place and go somewhere else. Herod wants to kill you." ³² He replied, "Go tell that fox, 'I will drive out demons and heal people today and tomorrow, and on the third day I will reach my goal.' ³³ In any case, I must keep going today and tomorrow and the next day—for surely no prophet can die outside Jerusalem! ³⁴ "O 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, but you were not willing! ³⁵ 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.'"

We are under the protection of a patient God and a persistent Savior.

- 1. He took action and was resolute to save.**
- 2. He will reject those who reject him.**
- 3. He will gather his children to himself in the New Jerusalem.**

A father watches as his child persistently attempts her challenging task. She fails not once but twice. She is unable to complete her project, but she is determined. With a face of pure determination she picks up those blocks again and builds her twisting tower. It falls yet again. She throws herself to the floor and kicks her feet in frustration. She cries. But she is resilient. Once more she picks herself up, grabs the blocks, and does her important work; but the tower falls and she is crushed. She stomps away; but to her father's surprise she returns for at least one more attempt. She is determined and this time she completes what she came to do. When her work is done the smile on her face is priceless. She is very pleased.

How many times are you and I willing to do things that don't work out immediately? More often than not if we are unable to accomplish something the first time, or the second time, it is difficult to try again. Frustration gets the best of us. Frequently we diagnose a situation as hopeless and move on even faster than a child might. Patience and persistence are virtues that are certainly found in some more than others.

How fortunate we are that God has such a patient and persistent nature. God should have tossed his people to the side and forgotten about them. But our God, by his very nature, is abounding in steadfast love and persistent grace. The unfaithfulness of his chosen people Israel is a horrible refrain in the pages of Scripture and it stands in such discord with the steady melody of God's goodness. God had set Israel aside as his own special people, but they were often more interested in the ways of the world. God protected them, ruled over them and in return he asked that they would follow his word. But like sheep who loved to wander they would stray from their shepherd's voice. In sinful curiosity they would allow themselves to be seduced by the gods of their neighbors

and then they willingly plunged themselves headlong into the harmful immorality of those around them.

Despite this unfaithfulness, God cared for his children. He loved them. He would not abandon them but instead he would call them to repentance. He would send his prophets. He would send them armed with the very word of the LORD. The children of Israel, however, would often pay no attention to God's warnings or they would lash out at the messenger. Historically unfaithful, stubborn, and thankless and yet for thousands upon thousands of years, and millions upon millions of transgressions God is so remarkable patient with his people Israel.

God's chosen people rejected his word and killed his prophets, but instead of turning his back on them God sent more prophets. Israel stoned and murdered messengers of God simply because they did not want to hear about their sin. Finally, God's patience reached its limit. For this constant disobedience God sent punishment. No longer did God protect them from their enemies and give them victory. No longer did they find shelter under the protection of the wings of the Almighty. Exposed to their enemies, without the strength and help of God, they were swept away into captivity.

But once again God did not simply diagnose the situation as hopeless and move on. No, God was patient and persistent in his love. God did not forget about his people, but he remembered his promise. He preserved for himself a remnant. He sent prophets and messengers of his word to his people while they were in captivity. He then remarkably returned his people to the land of promise. And yet, even then, many continued to wander from the Lord so God in his love sent his own Son. Unfortunately they did not listen to him either. God had been patient now he would be persistent in his love. When they threatened to kill Jesus God would actually use this habitual rejection as part of his plan. His chosen Messiah would die at the hands of his chosen people in order to bring about salvation for the entire world. God was patient and our Savior was persistent so that he might gather the world to himself and we might find refuge under his saving wings.

In our lesson for today Jesus was on his way to Jerusalem to accomplish this plan. As he traveled south toward Jerusalem he was probably still in the region of Galilee or he was in Perea, an area east of the Jordan River. Both of these regions were areas ruled by the Herod Antipas who had beheaded John the Baptist and certainly saw the merits of eliminating Jesus from his territory as well. Just like most of the Pharisees and Jewish leaders Herod found the mere presence of Jesus irritating and troublesome. They saw Jesus as a threat that needed to be neutralized; he was a nuisance that needed to be silenced.

We are not sure of the exact motive of these particular Pharisees who approached Jesus. Whether this was a group that sympathized with Jesus, or this was simply some sort of ploy to keep Jesus from further preaching and teaching, we are not sure. What we can be sure of is that Jesus was determined to reach his goal. God had patiently brought about his plan of salvation thus far, and now his Son Jesus Christ was going to be persistent in completing that plan. No threat would knock him off his course toward Jerusalem. After all, Jesus knew he was heading to his death. Like so many prophets before him, Jesus

would die at the hands of the citizens of Jerusalem. He was going there and nothing would stop him and he let those who came to him with warnings of Herod's threats know about it. ***"Go tell that fox, 'I will drive out demons and heal people today and tomorrow, and on the third day I will reach my goal.'"*** Jesus was determined to reach Jerusalem. Our Savior sent by a patient God was persistent in his love for us. He would reach his goal. He would go to Jerusalem. He would suffer in our place, he would die for our sins, and he would be raised to life to assure us of our redemption.

Jesus was resolute on his way to save us, but he was also deeply troubled by the fact many in Jerusalem would reject him and consequently lose out on salvation. God had been patient with them, persistently reached out to them, but they rejected him, and they would thus be outside of God's protection. They would be outside of God's salvation. Jesus mourned for Jerusalem. ³⁴ ***"O 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, but you were not willing!"*** God is pleased when his children repent. He is not pleased - he is saddened - when he is rejected. It is God's wonderful nature that he patiently and persistently reaches out to save. And yet unfortunately it is deeply imbedded in mankind's sinful nature to reject and turn away from God. And so as Jesus looks down on this world to today he is grieved like he was for Jerusalem. He longs to gather many to himself, but he is deeply troubled that many in this world reject him.

God looks down on this world and sees people in every nation, and city, and town, who ignore and reject his word. He weeps over those unbelievers in pagan countries who kill his prophets. He weeps over a nation like ours which has a growing number of people who grieve his heart by claiming he does not exist. He weeps over those throughout the world who simply don't care if he exists or not or have given their heart to another god or idol. He mourns for those whom he has called out to with his word and they have failed to hear his call, or pushed him away. He has offered to them love, protection, and salvation, but they have refused. Our God, our Savior, mourns over such souls, because those who reject him he will also reject. He persistently called them to himself, but they rejected his love, and because they are not under his protection and care through faith they are on their own exposed to sin, Satan, and death. Worst of all they are exposed to God's judgment. The words of Jesus serve as haunting echo through time, ***"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.'"*** On the last day every eye will see the judge Christ Jesus and must be covered by his saving presence. God's chosen people had every advantage, they had the house of God, the temple, but the presence of God had left them because they had deserted him. Judgment would come.

You and I too reject God. We may not have killed any prophets, but we must pay attention to our Savior's warning because daily we reject God's word. We ignore his will, we wander from his Word and go our own way, and that's sin. And the thing about sin is that God does not count one sin as any worse than any other. We grieve the heart of our God and our Savior whenever we sin. Whenever we reject the will of our God and do our

own thing we reject him, we reject his word. Like the ancient inhabitants of Jerusalem we have been thoughtless, selfish, and cruel. We have ignored God's will and have been seduced by the sins of this world. The horrible part is that if we continue in this sin, if we continue to ignore and reject God's will, if we continually abandon him we put ourselves in the situation where he will eventually leave us. Then we will be completely exposed to the powers of this world and the devil; and worst of all we will be left exposed to his righteous judgment. Woe to those who have no protection from the wrath of God! Woe to those who God the Father has called time and time again but have willingly wandered outside his reach. There will be no protection. They will be exposed and all their sins with them. They will be exposed to the coming wrath of God. They will be left without shelter, without excuse.

In his everlasting love Jesus came to spare us from judgment. He came to be our shelter our refuge from the wrath of God. He set his face like flint and headed to Jerusalem, where death was his certain fate. He continued on because he was determined to save us. A patient God had sent a persistent Savior. And now in his grace we have heard his steady call of the word and he has gathered us to himself in faith. He has gathered us to himself like a hen gathers his precious chicks. The Son protects us from our Heavenly Father's wrath. We are under the refuge of his wings. Our sins are covered by his salvation. God the Father looks down on us and we are covered by Jesus. God the Father looks down on us and sees the perfection, the holiness of Jesus, and God smiles upon us. His anger cools. We are safe. We are forgiven, and because we are covered by Christ he is glad to call us his own and in his grace he promises that one day he will bring us to the New Jerusalem. He will bring us to that place where all his children from every tongue and nation will be gathered to dwell in his presence for all time.

What remarkable patience and grace that God would do so much for us sinners who so often cause him such frustration. Our Savior was resolute to save us. He would not be fooled, intimidated, or persuaded. He would not be knocked off course in any way, but he would do the will of the Father until it was time to go to Jerusalem to lay down his life for us his friends. May we praise God for his patient and persistent nature and gladly listen to his voice and be connected to his Word. May we gladly receive the preaching and teaching of those he sends to us so that we may be strengthened in faith and strengthened in our resolve to live for him who died for us and was raised again. Our patient God was determined to save us and now he smiles upon us because he has brought us to faith. So as our Savior was persistent let us be resolute in our life for Christ. Let us be determined. Let us not be fooled by the things of this world, but let us live for our God today, tomorrow, and the next day until we reach our goal of heaven. Let us turn from sin, repent of our ways, and follow the ways of the Lord. Let us be determined to do things that would not make our Savior weep, but do things that would make our Savior proud. Let us remember the patient love of our God and the persistence of our Savior and forever find shelter under his wings of salvation. For this is good and pleases God our Savior. Amen.