

Luke Chapter 13 v 22 - 35

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Date: 19 January 2020

Preacher: Peter Robinson

[0 : 00] Chapter 13. So that'll be page 1046 in your Bibles. We're back in Luke after a break from December.

We're in Luke chapter 13 and starting in verse 22. So starting with the section, the narrow door.

Luke 13 verse 22. Once the owner of the house gets up and closes the door, you will stand outside knocking and pleading.

Sir, open the door for us. But he will answer, I don't know you or where you came from. Then you will say, we ate and drank with you and you taught in our streets.

But he will reply, I don't know you or where you come from. Away from me, all you evildoers. There will be weeping there and gnashing of teeth.

[1 : 26] When you see Abraham, Isaac and Jacob and all the prophets in the kingdom of God. But you yourselves thrown out. People will come from the east and west and north and south and will take their place at the feast in the kingdom of God.

Indeed, there are those who are last who will be first and first who will be last. At that time, some Pharisees came to Jesus and said to him, leave this place and go somewhere else.

Herod wants to kill you. He replied, go and 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.

In any case, I must press on today and tomorrow and the next day. For surely no prophet can die outside Jerusalem. Jerusalem, Jerusalem, you who kill the prophets and stone those who sent 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. Look, your house is left to you desolate.

[2 : 34] I tell you, you will not see me again until you say, blessed is he who comes in the name of the Lord. Please do sit down. Thank you, Joel, for leading us helpfully in prayer and in worship and in reading God's word.

We're going to turn back then to that reading in Luke and chapter 13. Luke and chapter 13. If you'd like to find that in your Bibles once more, it's page 1047.

Page 1047. And particularly, we're going to look this morning at verses 31 to 35. Just as Joel said, just before Christmas, in the lead up to Christmas, we were looking at this life of Jesus recorded by Luke.

And we took that break over the Christmas and New Year. And then this week we're back again. And we're back at verse 31. I wonder, how would you describe yourself in this way?

Are you somebody who gets easily distracted? And I don't mean just when I'm preaching. You know, when your mind wanders and you're thinking about the roast dinner and is it being burnt or not.

[3 : 47] That happens to everybody. Don't worry when I'm preaching. Now, I'm talking about, do you start something but find yourself getting diverted from the task at hand?

It may just be a hobby. It may just be in a job that you're doing. It may just even be in watching a TV program, whatever it may be, or reading a book. And you intend to watch. You intend to read.

You intend to complete this task at hand. But something happens. Something gets your attention elsewhere. Or something directs you.

So you lose your way a bit. Or even you just don't finish what you start. Pilgrim's Progress, one of my favorite books, as you know, has that episode in the life of Christian where he's walking along the path.

And it's becoming a bit stony. And he sees by path meadow. And looks lovely. And he wanders from the path. He doesn't quite keep the way he's going.

[4 : 46] He gets diverted. He gets distracted. And it brings him all sorts of trouble. Now when we get to verse 31 and following to the end of the chapter, we find that our Lord Jesus Christ here was tempted to wander from the path he was following.

He was on a journey, remember. He's on this journey to Jerusalem. It's something which he's been on since his birth, since his coming into the world. He's always been headed for Jerusalem.

Always headed for that ultimate goal. But in the recent months leading up to this time, he particularly has in mind this goal for him in Jerusalem.

As we read back in chapter 9, as the time approached for him to be taken up to heaven, Jesus resolutely, and the aviary, I think, set his face as flint.

Resolutely set out for Jerusalem. And this journey of Jesus would be a north to south journey, almost covering a greater part of the land.

[5 : 52] He, as you know, grew up in the north. He's a proper northerner, was Jesus. And we know that the northerners had their own particular accent because the Galileans, remember when Peter was being interviewed by that woman at the fire on the night before Jesus?

She said, oh, you're Galilean. We can tell by your accent. He was proper broad, he was. And Jesus, no doubt, would have been broad in that sense as well. But he's traveling from the north, the Galilee area, traveling down ultimately to the south, the southern part of the country, Jerusalem.

Jerusalem, the very capital, the very heart of the nation. And, of course, he knows what's at the end. He knows where he's heading. He knows it's not just to get to the capital.

He knows very well what awaits him when he gets there. He's told his disciples on more than one occasion. Back in chapter 9, again of Luke 21, he said, the Son of Man must suffer many things, be rejected by the elders and chief priests, the teacher of the law.

He must be killed on the third day. Rise again. And so when we meet Jesus, as we do, traveling, he's still in that northern area.

[7 : 08] He's in that area of Galilee, which was under the rule in one sense, under the authority of King Herod. Not Herod, that we associate with Christmas, who killed the children, that nasty, nasty king.

This was his son, Herod Antipas, he was known as. And he was the one, of course, who put to death John the Baptist when he was deceived by his stepdaughter.

So he's in this region. And we find in verse 31, he's approached, Jesus is approached by some Pharisees. The Pharisees were the ultra-strict religious group.

And whenever we meet with him, they're inquisitive, but they are often hostile to Jesus, often very much against him.

Back in chapter 11, when Jesus went outside, he'd been in the house, in fact, of a Pharisee having a meal. The Pharisees, the teacher of the law, began to oppose him fiercely, to besiege him with questions, waiting to catch him in something he might say.

[8 : 18] And as we go through the biography of Jesus, we'll find that it's the Pharisees, particularly, who are the ones who seek ultimately his death and his destruction, who hate him because of the things he was teaching and the things he was doing.

But here they are, they come to Jesus. And it's a peculiar meeting, isn't it? Some of the Pharisees came to Jesus and said to him, leave this place and go somewhere else.

Well, that's not uncommon. They really didn't like Jesus. They want to get rid of him. But they say, Herod wants to kill you. That's very surprising because they really didn't much care for Jesus.

So why would they warn him about a potential threat to his life? Was it something sincere? Yeah, perhaps these Pharisees were sincere Pharisees. You might say that perhaps they really had a concern for him.

Was there actually any threat at all to Jesus' life? We don't know of anywhere else where we're told that Herod wanted to kill Jesus. Yes, he'd killed John the Baptist.

[9 : 23] It's possible he had it in for Jesus. It's possible that this is a real threat. We're not sure at all. But the real concern for us is how will Jesus deal with this threat?

They're telling him in one sense to get away, to flee, to hide yourself, to get away from the path you're following. It's going to lead to your death.

It's going to lead to your destruction. How will Jesus face this threat to his life? As I said, Jesus often met with opposition. The Pharisees, but others as well, would often say to him, just get out.

We don't want to hear what you're saying. We don't want to see what you're doing. There was opposition to him and rejection of him wherever he went. Even the people of his own area at one time tried to stone him, tried to throw him off the cliff.

There were, of course, his 12 disciples. There were those who were committed to him through thick and thin. There were those who wouldn't leave him. Now he's got this new attempt, as it were, to divert him away from doing his father's will.

[10 : 32] And the answer that Jesus sends back to Herod or to the Pharisees has a lot to teach us, to show us that he will not be diverted.

He will not be moved from the path he's chosen to follow. He will press on to the very, very end. Now in these last two Sundays, we've been thinking about the importance of every Christian focusing upon following Christ.

Of being determined to keep on, to press on. We've been looking particularly at the words of Paul as he opened his heart to the Philippian Christians in Philippians chapter 3.

One thing he said, one thing above all else, one thing I do. Forgetting what is behind and straining towards what is ahead. I press on towards the goal.

You and I, dear friends, have been called to that same determination. To press on, to persevere, to follow, to seek, to live for.

[11 : 36] The Lord Jesus Christ. But the truth is, we too get diverted in our Christian life. We get easily distracted in the Christian life.

And one of the things that can and does, I think, keep us from following Christ faithfully and pressing on in our desire to live for him is fear. Fear.

Now what did the Pharisees expect Jesus to feel when they told him that Herod wanted to kill him? They expected him to be afraid. They expected him to be fearful for his life and to run away, as it were.

Now, there are many Christians around the world, even today, who are fearful for their lives. Many Christians today who will be in prison, perhaps even waiting execution.

There will even be Christians today who will be killed or murdered for their faith. We must remember them in prayer. Remember to support them and love them. However, although we have no reason to fear that this will happen to us, yet still fear does have an effect upon us.

[12 : 45] Fear is the second most powerful force in the world. Love is the most powerful, but fear is extremely powerful. We may be not afraid for our lives that we will be killed or imprisoned or executed, but we're fearful of what others may do to us if we faithfully live for Christ or say about us when we seek to be faithful to his word.

We're afraid even what they'll think of us. And that can cause us to wander from God's way. That can cause us to be diverted, distracted, compromised in seeking to live for God, to follow him, and to keep to his ways.

But there's other fears too. There's, of course, those fears of missing out. Missing out on what the world has to offer. If I follow Jesus wholeheartedly, then all the things that my so-called friends get up to, I can't do.

I'm going to miss out. Maybe there's the fear that I might lose out on a promotion because I'm determined to be faithful to Christ. Miss out on the pleasures that others seem to be engaging in.

Fear out on losing money if I am honest and faithful to God. Fear has a very real influence upon us.

[14 : 10] And perhaps for some of us here who are not Christians, there is that fear that keeps us from following Christ. Fear of what our family will say. Fear of what people will think of us.

Fear of our friends rejecting us. Fear is a terrible imposition upon the life of any person. And so as Jesus responds to this threat, as it were, as he responds to this attempt to divert him from following and living and God, then we need to also learn from him.

And there's two things that we learn from him here, and then a third which is unique to him. We see that Jesus would not be diverted. He would not be removed from following the Lord, his heavenly Father, with consistency and commitment.

Because he knew that he was in God's care. He knew who had the authority. He knew who was looking after him. You see, Herod was a puppet king.

A puppet of the Roman Empire. He had this small area of Galilee over which he wandered around thinking of himself as something special. But he was just a Roman stooge.

[15 : 26] He had very little authority to speak of. That's why Jesus calls him a fox. And not a fox that is clever and cunning. But a fox who is someone who is rather weak and insignificant.

As compared to a lion. You see, a king is a lion with real authority and power. But a fox is a weak substitute. That's the sense here that Jesus is talking about.

Go tell that fox. He's insignificant. He has no real authority. He has no real bite, as it were.

But dear friends, we have nothing to fear. From even the most powerful men and women in the world. Let alone the people that we live amongst day by day.

Or work amongst day by day. We do not need to be afraid. Earlier on, Jesus says to the disciples. When he was talking about the opposition they would face.

[16 : 28] I tell you, my friends, do not be afraid of those who kill the body. And after that, can do no more. But I show you whom you should fear.

Fear him. Who after your body's been killed has authority to throw you into hell. Yes, I tell you, fear him. We sang, didn't we, just in that last verse of our hymn.

Fear him. That's God. You saints. And you will then have nothing else to fear. There's a fear of God, which means that we recognize that he is the power and authority over our lives.

The one who cares for us and the one who is king. That drives away all those other fears. Those trembling fears. Those oppressive fears.

Of what others may say or do to us. Jesus knew that he was in the sovereign hand of God. He knew that he was under the care of his heavenly father.

[17 : 27] I will keep on driving out demons and healing people today and tomorrow. And on the third day, I will reach my goal. He knew that he was about the Lord's work.

And that the Lord had his hand upon him. And that he had a greater authority than any human king. 1 John in chapter 4 tells us that there is no fear in love.

But perfect love drives out fear. Dear Christian, when we know that we are in the very center of the love of God. And that that love of God to us is a powerful, keeping, protecting, delivering love.

Then we have no reason to fear anything that anyone may say or do. We need not fear them when we fear God in that right way.

The second reason why Jesus would not be diverted because of fear was because he knew he was doing God's will. As I read there from verse 32, I'll keep on driving out demons and healing people today and tomorrow.

[18 : 40] On the third day, I'll reach my goal. In any case, I must press on today and tomorrow and the next day. For surely no prophet can die outside Jerusalem.

Jesus was on a mission. God's mission. The Father's mission. The mission to deliver men and women from spiritual darkness and oppression. That the mission to break into people's lives with the very power and kingdom of God.

He wasn't going to be diverted from that. The work the Father had given him was the work that he loved. The work that he lived and breathed for. As he said to his disciples in John 4, My food, said Jesus, is to do the will of him who sent me and to finish his work.

Jesus wasn't going to be, as it were, put off. He wasn't going to be diverted. He wasn't going to be distracted. He wasn't going to leave unfinished what the Father had given him to do.

He was going to keep on doing it. And when he says today, tomorrow, and onwards, in other words, I'm just going to keep on and keep on day after day after day. Until I reach that climax.

[19 : 47] That culmination. That place of completion. Where we have that phrase, I will reach my goal. The root sense of the word is accomplishment.

Until I'm accomplished. Until I've perfected. Until I've finished. It's a very similar word. Related to that word he preached and proclaimed as he was about to die on the cross.

Finished. Completed. Accomplished. That's what his life was about. Finishing and accomplishing the work of God. And nothing would divert him from that course.

That life's mission. Taking him to Jerusalem. Taking him up to the cross. To carry out the ultimate work that God had called for him to do.

The great purpose of his life was that he might die. As a savior for sinners. Now dear friends, you and I are on a mission. You and I are about the Lord's work.

[20 : 50] You and I have a purpose and a plan. One that God has given us. One that God wants us to carry on until completion. We are his children.

We have been called to be his people. His servants. You and I, dear Christians, are not, as it were, like the rest of society. Just sort of wandering through the years of life.

Of putting off the thought of death until eventually it has to, it crowds in to our lives. We're not just sort of going through, trying to find pleasures where we can. Or help where we can.

We are people who are sent of God. Saved by God and sent by God. As Jesus said to his disciples, as the Father has sent me, so I send you. And let me assure you of this.

You are untouchable until the time God has determined to take you from this world. You are immortal until the time that God has determined your work is completed.

[21 : 56] We may feel like we get to a point in our lives where we say, well, that's it. I'm whatever age I particularly am. And I've done all the work. I've lived the life of the Christian. Now that's it.

I'm just going to sort of free coast, as it were, to the end of the line. No, you can't, dear friends. You mustn't, in fact. God will decide when your work is done.

God will decide the time when it's to hang up your boots and to get to heaven to finish the work. Now you are on course.

Now you are in a race. There will come a day, indeed, when you can say, like the Apostle Paul, just before his death, I've fought the good fight. I've finished the race.

I've kept the faith. But that hasn't happened yet. So don't be diverted. Don't think that your life is of no purpose or meaning. Don't think that God has finished with you or cast you aside.

[22 : 54] Don't think that somehow what will happen to you in this world will, as it were, intercede God's plan for you. He has a plan and he has a purpose for your life and for mine. And we are to press on it.

We may not know exactly where he's going to lead, but we know that he's faithful. We know what he's given us to do. We know that we are to seek him and to follow him and to love him and to serve.

Jesus was not going to be diverted, no matter what people would say, because he knew that he was about the Father's will, and so are you and I. And then thirdly here, and uniquely to Jesus, this is.

I'd like the other two. This is unique to Jesus. He would not be diverted, I believe, from going to Jerusalem because of his love for sinners. Now there's a real shift, isn't there, in verse 34 from verse 33.

It's as if, as Jesus has mentioned Jerusalem and the necessity for him to die there, that his heart is suddenly moved. Moved with a mixture of passion, of sorrow and longing.

[24 : 06] You can hear the pathos, can't you, in Jerusalem, Jerusalem. There's something deep within his heart that is overwhelming. There's something that's coming up from within.

And it's not a pity for himself. It's not fear or anxiety or worry that I'm going to die there. What a terrible thing this is. But compassion and sorrow for the people who are turned against their God.

Jerusalem, Jerusalem, you who kill the prophets and stone those sent to you. From a heart full of compassion.

For those who, in spite of all their evil and sin and wickedness, who had rejected God and his servants again and again. In spite of all of that, his heart is moved with love for them.

And he longs for them to be saved. Jerusalem, as I said before, was the very center of the worship of God. It was the center of the nation, the spiritual hub.

[25 : 06] It represented all the people of God, all the Israelites. It was the place in which the temple was, where God's presence was to dwell in his people. And though this nation and though these people, Jerusalem, had over and over again not only been distracted from following God, as they had and followed false gods and false religions.

In spite of God's faithfulness, in spite of his constant care and love for them. But they had not only been diverted from following him, but again and again they had rejected his messengers of love.

Those prophets who called them back to God. Who called them to seek him and to be restored to him. They killed them. Imprisoned them. Cast them out.

But now, once again, God is coming to them. How amazing is the patience of our God. He's coming again. He sent messengers again and again.

He's now sent his son for this final time. This final opportunity. How God longed to gather them.

[26 : 20] As chicks under his wings. How he longed for them to come into his embrace. To come under the shelter and the protection and the salvation that he has to offer.

How he longs. Do you hear the words of Jesus? I've longed. Don't let anybody ever tell you that God is indifferent or uncaring or doesn't bother.

He longs for men and women. He longs for these people to come to him and be brought into the safety of his embrace. Something that we read there back in Psalm 91.

Whoever dwells in the shelter of the Most High will rest in the shadow of the Almighty. This is the Old Testament God. Again, don't let anybody tell you lies about the Old Testament God.

That he's different from the New Testament God. Listen to what he says. He will cover you with his feathers. Under his wings you'll find refuge. His faithfulness will be your shield and your fortress.

[27 : 18] The God of the Old Testament is a God of mercy and compassion, of gentleness. He likens himself to a hen. How amazing that God should do that.

He calls us his children, his chicks, how he longs that we should come. But they weren't willing, were they? I'd long to gather you, your children, as a heather gathers her chicks under wings, but you were not willing.

You didn't want me. You didn't want this love. You didn't want this protection. You didn't want this salvation. You didn't want this care. And Jesus knew as he was going to Jerusalem, he knew that they would reject him once again as they'd done before.

That they would reject the God who created and gave them so many blessings. That they would turn away from him and they'd cry, crucify him. Crucify him. After all that they'd seen and all that they'd heard and all that he'd done, they would reject even the very son of God.

Put him to death. Jerusalem, Jerusalem. You kill the prophets and stone those sent you, how I belong to gather your children.

[28 : 34] As a hen gathers chicks under her wings. But you were not willing. Again, it's not that Jesus is full of passion and full of grief for himself.

He's not saying, oh, you're rejecting me and I feel so sorry for myself. When you feel rejected, you have that sense of self-pity. It's not that his heart was broken for himself. His heart is breaking for these people.

Because he knows what their rejection of him will mean. Because he knows what ultimately is the consequence of turning away from God again and again. From being unwilling to embrace him and come into his embrace.

The end result is desolation. What a word. Desolation. Destruction. Despair. Despair. It means this. Look, your house is left to you empty.

Forsaken. Forsaken by God. The very home.

[29 : 38] The very lives that they live. This temple that was built for the glory of God for him to dwell in. This Jerusalem, which was God's city amongst his people, would be empty.

God would leave them. They have deserted God and rejected him. Therefore, now he will leave them and desert them. Dear friends, let me assure you of this.

That to constantly reject the loving invitation of Jesus has only one conclusion for you. It is everlasting and eternal separation from God in hell.

That's why we read as we did about Jesus and the narrow door. And the people who come when the door is closed too late saying, please let me in. Now I want you, God. Now I want you at the end when it's too late.

I didn't want you in my life. But at the end of days, Jesus says, away from me. I don't know you. Notice how he describes what hell is like.

[30 : 40] There will be weeping there and gnashing of teeth. When you see Abraham, Isaac, Jacob and all the prophets in the kingdom of God. But you yourselves thrown out. Jesus was moved with love for the wicked.

Love for the sinful. Love for the God rejecters. That's what moved him. That's what drove him to go to the cross. That drove him to go to Jerusalem. Because he knew unless he finished the work that God had given him to do.

Unless he died in the place of sinners. There was no hope of salvation. But every single person would be left desolate. Every single person would be eternally forsaken of God.

That's why he went to the cross. That's why he wouldn't be diverted. That's why fear wouldn't have its place in his life. Because his love for you and I. For sinners.

For God-haters. For rejecters. Took him all the way. And he says to them now. I tell you. You will not see me again. In other words. This is the last.

[31 : 50] The final. Opportunity. You will not see me again. Until you say. Blessed is he who comes in the name of the Lord. He's not talking about that Palm Sunday.

When he rode in on the donkey. Because it was only the disciples of Jesus. We're told. Who praised him. It wasn't all Jerusalem who praised him. All welcomed him. Just those disciples said.

Blessed is he who comes in the name of the Lord. Jesus is talking now. About the next time that God visits. This world. When Christ returns.

When judgment is brought. Yes. It will not be until then. When Jesus comes again. That the majority of the people of Jerusalem. And the majority of the people of this world.

Will see who Jesus truly is. The one who came in the name of the Lord. They'll recognize him as the Messiah. They'll recognize him as the Savior. But then it will be too late.

[32 : 46] Too late to receive his embrace. Because the door is shut. Too late to enter into the warmth of his forgiveness. It will be a horrific day. A day when we will only see Jesus as judge.

Dear friends. What Jesus had to say to Jerusalem. He says over you as well. He says to you dear friends.

How I long to gather you under my wings. I long to rescue you. I long to bring you into my life. I long to bring my life into you. And bring you into the blessings that I have for you.

But are you willing? Are you willing? You've got to want. You've got to receive. It's not going to happen automatically.

Jesus says you won't see me until you say blessed is he who comes in the name of the Lord. Until you see Jesus as God's blessing for you. As you see him as the most wonderful delightful Savior.

[33 : 50] Until you see him as that which you must have above all else. You can be saved from God's judgment.

You can be rescued from the punishment that your sinful acts, words and thoughts deserve. But are you willing?

Will you again today as you've done before say no. No. I'm not willing to accept Jesus as my Lord and Savior. Without being theatrical.

It may be the last time. It may be your last opportunity. You've got no guarantee. That between now and the next time that Jesus comes and speaks to you through his word.

You will not be taken from this life. Or that Jesus himself will not return. When you cannot afford, dear friends, to keep on saying I am not willing.

[34 : 57] Because the day must come when the door is closed. And then there's no second chance. God's giving you his second chance.

And a third. And a fourth. And a fifth. And I don't know how many chances you've had. Are you willing? He's willing. He's willing to receive you now.

Sinful though you are. Wicked though you are. He's willing to forgive you. He's willing to cleanse you from that sin. He's willing to accept you and make you his child. He's willing to give to you that joy of life everlasting and the certainty of God's love.

He's willing. He's willing to give to you that joy of life everlasting and the truth. He's willing to give to you that joy of life everlasting and the truth. He's willing to give to you that joy of life everlasting and the truth. But Jesus himself said in John chapter 6, All that the Father gives me will come to me. And whoever comes to me, I'll never drive away.

Let's pray. Father in heaven, we often find ourselves diverted and distracted from what really matters in life.

[36 : 13] There's so many things around about us, so many things going on, so many, as it were, claims upon our time and cries for our help or whatever it may be that we, we, we, we lose track.

We lose our way. We wander from the path. We pray for ourselves, each one of us who is a Christian this morning, that, Lord, you would deliver us from all fear and put within our hearts afresh that great passion and desire to follow you.

Take away fear and fill us with love because love conquers over, conquers all fear. We pray, Lord, that in love we may follow you and seek you, trusting you, Lord, each day, knowing that you have a purpose and a plan for us each day, walking in your ways.

We thank you for your incredible mercy to us, that once we were unwilling, once we were hard-hearted, once we turned away from you and rejected your messages of love and care, and yet, Lord, thank you that there came that day when you melted our hearts and you made us willing.

And we said, yes, Lord Jesus, come into my life and forgive me and save me. And so we do pray for those even here this morning. Lord, you know each heart and each life.

[37 : 33] You know that there are some of us here who said, no, I'm not willing for Jesus to be my savior, not willing to come under his love and care, I'm not willing to bow the knee to him and say, Jesus, you are the Lord of my life.

Lord, please make us willing. Take away the fear. Take away the things that blind. Take away the hardness of our hearts.

Give us that faith and repentance that we might say, yes, Lord, come for I see just what danger I'm in. I see what great harm there is ahead of me.

And I see all that I've missed so far. Oh, Lord, come by your spirit. Make unwilling hearts willing. And oh, Lord, lead us in your paths everlasting, we pray.

Amen.