

Luke 13:31-35 Lent 2C
February 21, 2016

Grace and peace to you from God our Father and from our Lord and Savior Jesus Christ!

Five verses is all our gospel passage gives us this morning more than likely making it one of the shortest passages in the three-year lectionary cycle. Here we find the Son of God diligently at work ushering in God's kingdom. Jesus, true to His mission, is continuing to reveal God's glory and overcoming the evil always lurking in an effort to overthrow God's kingdom. Jesus will not be swayed from the mission God has set before Him. The Pharisee's, often portrayed unfavorably, are doing quite the opposite here advising Jesus Herod is seeking to kill him and urging him to flee for his life. Yet, Jesus will not be deterred by powers of this world or even well-intended onlookers concerned for his well-being in His effort to bring to conclusion that story the Bible has continually revealed – the story of salvation. Even though He knows what lies ahead at the end of His journey in which he will hear the insults, witness the betrayal, feel the abandonment of His closest companions, bear the burden of the world's sin – yet, He will continue on because of His desire to carry out the will of His Father to save God's people. Even knowing all that has happened in Jerusalem in the past to God's prophets that preceded him and knowing all too well what his fate will be Jesus never compromises on revealing the true heart of God as he gives us a beautiful image stating, "How often have I desired to gather your children together as a hen gathers her brood under her wings, and you were not willing!" Jesus is unrelenting in his pursuit to draw all people under the care of his wings. If we ever think we are unworthy of his love because of something we have done, said, or even left undone, then hear the words of this passage, which show just how much he desires to be in relationship with us. Like a

mother longing desperately to protect and embrace her loving offspring in the shelter of her bosom so it is with the Son of God who spares no costs in revealing the full majesty of God's grace.

This passage also raises an interesting question for the people of God: what foxes get in the way, or deter us from the mission God has set before us? Lent is a season for us to take a deep, long, and hard look at ourselves, our congregation, and our lives as disciples' of Jesus Christ and ponder if we are willing to traverse that heart-breaking journey with him to the cross? But what is the mission God has set before us? Perhaps you have noticed the mission statement of this faith community, discerned and developed prior to my arrival, has been displayed more prominently as of late in our bulletin, newsletter and other means of communication. It states: *"To grow so deep in Christ through worship, education, and fellowship that we celebrate by reaching out to others."* I am guilty of not lifting this mission statement up enough since my time here; but I can't put the burden of this all on my own shoulders because we are in this together and we all share in carrying out this mission with the help of God. While the mission Jesus sets before us as He calls us to himself in the waters of baptism is much broader than the above statement the fact remains there certainly was much time, effort, and prayer that went into the birthing of this statement. It wasn't just pulled out of thin air but it was rather discerned and revealed via the power of the Holy Spirit. God's hand was in it. For now, this is the mission statement laid out before this community of faith; therefore, let us ponder what is drawing us away from living this out to our fullest potential? What deters us individually and as a community united together in Jesus Christ?

The first part says, "To grow so deep in Christ." This speaks first and foremost of a relationship and isn't that what is at the heart of who we are as God's people – a relationship we have been invited and called into by the very God who created us from the dust of the earth breathing into us the spark

of life. In order to sustain this relationship we must grow it, nurture it, and tend to it – yet we easily get distracted don't we? I know I do. It's much too simple to get pulled off the course Jesus so desires us to follow because after all there are a plethora of voices calling out to us, a multitude of choices of where we can spend our gifts of time, money, and energy, and a host of excuses we can come up with. Faith is not easy stuff. It requires a lot of work on our part. Not work to make ourselves right before God. That work has already been done through what our Lord and Savior has done on the cross and through his glorious resurrection on the third day. No, the work we are talking about is the work that comes with cultivating any relationship. If we think we can simply sit back and let God do all the work then we will never fully live into the people God created us to be and experience the completeness of God's joy, love, compassion, and peace. With faith comes work.

That work is part of our mission as stated, "To grow so deep in Christ." While Lent is a season with much meaning behind it and many people undergo a variety of disciplines and practices, perhaps we can view Lent also as an invitation built into the church year to reorient ourselves to more fully living out our mission to grow so deep in Christ. To make ourselves vulnerable and be open and honest with ourselves about those things, which deter us from setting our eyes on Christ and growing deeper in our relationship with him. Perhaps, it is fear. We know where the mission God sets before Jesus will lead him. We know the path he is on is one fraught with conflict, betrayal, scorn, shame, abandonment, hostility, and clearly is not one we would classify as the "American dream." Growing our relationship with Jesus does bring with it some fear. Fear of where he might lead us? Fear of what we might have to give up? Fear of letting go of those things we cling so tightly to that ultimately are temporary and will fade away. Fear of opening ourselves up and truly revealing to God our most inner secrets, hurts, guilt, shame, and letting God transform all that crap into fruits of the Holy Spirit. It's a

lot easier to hold onto this stuff and let it fester, grow, and tarnish our relationship with God and one another than it is to face it head on, admit to it, name it, and let it go.

To grow so deep in Christ isn't done strictly on a personal level. It's not just Jesus and me. It's Jesus and us. Yes, we do foster our relationship with Jesus on a personal level through prayer, reading scripture, and giving back to God what was rightfully God's to begin with: our money, time, and talents. But, as our mission statement says growing deep in Jesus is also done communally within the body of Christ, the church (aka the people) through worship, education, and fellowship. These are three critical aspects of our life together through which Jesus meets us and draws us closer and deeper into a relationship with him and ultimately with each other. Perhaps, this Lent one of our disciplines could simply be to sit down and name those things that veer us from growing in our relationship with Jesus through worship, education, and fellowship? Because ultimately by naming them, whatever they may be: work, sports, apathy, fear, anger, family, time, etc.; we may just find God working and freeing us from those things and opening our eyes up to the realization of what we truly need to grow deeper in Christ. In the midst of our hectic schedules and busy lives we may just catch a glimpse of Jesus, the mothering hen, with arms outstretched longing desperately to gather us in and share with us the love of God.