Lectionary Gospel Commentaries

By the Rev. Dr. Harry Wendt, Founder of Crossways International

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Based on the Lectionary Pericope Covering: **Luke 13:31-35**

SOLA-LSB (Lutheran Service Book): Year C - Lent 2, Text: Luke 13:31-35
RCL (Revised Common Lectionary): Year C - Lent 2, Text: Luke 13:31-35

Verse 13:31: The passage under review makes reference to an incident involving Herod Antipas — an incident mentioned only in Luke's Gospel. (Note also the references to "foxes," the Herodians, in 9:58.)

The dialog outlined raises a question: Did the Pharisees want to save Jesus from Herod (who ruled Galilee and Perea), or did they want to lure Him into Judea and Jerusalem where they were powerful enough to secure His condemnation?

Verse 13:32: Jesus' reply reflects a note of bitter irony. Herod is nothing but a fox — crafty, without honor, and totally self-centered. The Jews regarded the fox as the most sly and seductive of animals, and they linked the word to a weak and worthless man.

Those to whom Jesus ministers must note how Jesus carries out His servant ministry: He casts out demons and constantly cures the sick. The term "third day" means a limited period of time. In relation to Jesus finishing His work on the third day, note again John 19:30.

Verse 13:33: Jesus will not be sidetracked by any fear of what Herod Antipas might be planning to do. He must continue on His way to Jerusalem. After all, Jerusalem has quite a reputation in relation to how it has treated God's prophets!

The grand finale to His own ministry must take place in that tragically deluded city! And although Jesus' followers will say, "Oh, no!" at the cross, His Father will say "Oh, yes!" on Good Friday and on Easter Sunday morning!

Verse 13:34: Jesus' words reflect the spirit of Jeremiah's grief in relation to Jerusalem's refusal to heed his message (see Jeremiah 12:7; 21:14; 22:6). Jesus longed to gather God's people into His care and Kingdom, even as a hen seeks to gather her chickens under her wings in a time of serious danger — as, for example, when grass or forest fire breaks out.

But sadly, those who see what Jesus does and hear what He says refuse to come to Him to find eternal security. In Matthew's Gospel (see 23:37–39), Jesus speaks these words when He is already in Jerusalem, and the events of Palm Sunday seem like a distant memory.

Verse 13:35: The final section of this verse is a quote from Psalm 118:26. The Jews chanted this psalm when observing the great pilgrim feasts, especially Tabernacles, their autumn harvest festival. It was chanted during the Palm Sunday procession when Jesus entered Jerusalem just prior to His crucifixion.

However, in the present context ,Jesus is referring to the final breaking in of the Messianic Age. The final feast of Tabernacles must wait until the Jewish people are ready to understand Jesus' divine identity and the true nature of His Kingdom — and to participate in its eternal joys.

So, Jesus continues on His way to Jerusalem and the Temple. Scholars suggest that the city's population in Jesus' day was about 55,000. Some suggest that at least 9,000 priests served on the Temple's staff but not necessarily on a full-time basis. Although the "top brass" of the priests lived in Jerusalem (and in luxury!), few ordinary priests did — and went to Jerusalem for a week only twice each year.

About 80% of Jerusalem's residents earned their living through their involvement in the Temple's "salvation marketing system" by providing pilgrims with accommodation and food and by selling them the animals used in the sacrificial system. Little wonder, then, that Jesus' attack on the Temple system gave rise to fierce opposition and anger on the part of priests, businessmen, and tradesmen. Jesus was threatening their ability to earn a living!

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