

LUKE 13 : 31 - 35
DON'T PUSH GOD

On that very day some Pharisees came, saying to Him, "Get out and depart from here, for Herod wants to kill You.

And He said to them, Go, tell that fox, "Behold, I cast out demons and perform cures today and tomorrow, and the third day I shall be perfected." Nevertheless I must journey today, tomorrow, and the day following; for it cannot be that a prophet should perish outside of Jerusalem.

*"O Jerusalem, Jerusalem, the one who kills the prophets and stones those who are sent to her! How often I wanted to gather your children together, as a hen gathers her brood under her wings, but you were not willing!"
³⁵ See! Your house is left to you desolate; and assuredly, I say to you, you shall not see Me until the time comes when you say, 'Blessed is He who comes in the name of the LORD!' "*

Do you like being pushed? If at some time you were reluctant to introduce yourself to someone, did you like being "pushed" in the back? When you are doing your work and someone starts "pushing" you to go faster, is that pleasant? To be pushed is distasteful.

Jesus was teaching and healing in the northern region of the land of the Jews—in Galilee, or perhaps in Perea across the Jordan River. Both were ruled by "king" Herod under the Romans. Jesus was answering a question whether only a few would be saved. He stated that the "gate" to eternal life is narrow. Indeed, the Bible says salvation is only through faith in Christ's righteousness, which He presented to God for you and for all. However, people easily think that they have time to get serious about God and Christ later. They likewise figure that they will have easy access because of their great "record" or their great "connections." However, when the door is shut against those who approach without Christ, it will be too late. The Lord of Truth will say to them, "I never knew you; depart from Me, you who work iniquity (sin)." No matter what a person's physical record or physical "connections" to the Savior are, without faith in His forgiveness, one is not a child of God.

Beware that you do not bank on your family connections, your congregational connections, or your many labors for church. None of these things make anyone a son or daughter of God. Imagine the heartache and tears when one is excluded from the blessed life at God's throne in heaven, where Abraham, Isaac, Jacob, and all believers are. Without faith in Christ, it won't help if someone in your family is a pastor, if your congregation is St. Luke's, if your church body is the CLC. These are all blessings, but only Jesus saves from sin. Those who approach with simple childlike trust in Jesus will be warmly received.

While Jesus was discussing the "narrow gate" to Heaven, He was approached by Pharisees. He did not chase them away, though they were His enemies! I cannot think of one instance in the Bible where Jesus chased anyone away. You can always go to Jesus for His forgiveness, comfort, help, and guidance, for soul and body. The Pharisees had come with words of warning, "*Get out and depart from here, for Herod wants to kill You.*" Did Herod really want to kill Jesus? That's not recorded anywhere else in the Bible. True enough, Herod had put John the Baptist to death, and John was closely associated with Jesus, pointing his listeners to Jesus, the sacrificial Lamb of God and our Savior. Even at that, Herod hadn't exactly been seeking to put John to death. It was the result of his foolish pride. But it is possible that his conscience and Jesus' presence in his territory bothered him. Perhaps he wanted to "push" Jesus out. It could be. Have you ever followed one bad act with another in hopes of quieting your conscience?—to steal money and then lie about it to get the "heat" off your back? However, would Herod have sent the Pharisees to Jesus? It seems unlikely.

Perhaps the real culprits were the Pharisees themselves. Maybe they had caught wind of some "negative vibes" against Jesus from Herod, and were seeking to curry favor with him by approaching Jesus. Or, maybe they themselves wanted Jesus to leave Galilee and Herod's jurisdiction and come to Judea and Jerusalem in the south? Jerusalem was the center of Jewish religious life. There Jesus could be dealt with by the religious leaders. There His popularity with the crowds could be squashed more easily—to the immense satisfaction of the Pharisees. Perhaps the Pharisees themselves were trying to "push" Jesus to get Him to Jerusalem and in their power.

Do you ever try to push God? You can try, but it will never end up pleasing God or helping you. For example, have you ever known someone, who was pushing God, that she or he would soon be married? A marriage soon followed; but not one built on God-pleasing grounds. And grief followed for years. Or, perhaps someone has pushed and pleaded—not just prayed, but pushed—that God spare a family member’s life. “God, You have to!” The life was spared, but at great difficulty and unhappiness for the one spared and all involved.

Jesus knew exactly what was going on. He replied to the Pharisees, *Go, tell that fox!* A fox is a cunning predator. If it was Herod who was behind this, Jesus was well aware of Herod’s devious, underhanded methods. Herod’s father, Herod the Great, had made a deceptive request of the Wise Men, “Find out where the child Jesus is and tell me, so I can worship Him too.” Herod actually wanted to **kill** Him! Jesus knew this younger Herod too. He would not be intimidated. If, on the other hand, this was a plot was devised by the Pharisees, Jesus knew that too. He was telling them that He was not about to be pushed by any fox.

Jesus continued, *Behold, I cast out demons and perform cures today and tomorrow, and the third day I shall be perfected.* In other words, “I will continue My teaching and My miracles until the time is right for Me to cease—today, tomorrow, and the third (or ‘next’) day. A continued chain of days would proceed until the time was right. Then, *I shall be “perfected”*—a puzzling phrase. Wasn’t Jesus already perfect? Yes, He was. But the Greek for “perfect” carries with it the idea of being “fully extended”—such as a telescope that is at its max, or an assignment that is completely fulfilled. This “perfection and fulfillment” would be reached at Jesus’ death for sin and His resurrection in victory—also a “third day.” Jesus was saying, “I will continue My teaching and healing until fulfillment is reached. Therefore, Mr. Herod, Mr. Pharisees, or Mr. Anybody, don’t try to push Me according to your will. My mission will be carried in just the right way and at just the right time.”

“I must journey today, tomorrow, and the day following; for it cannot be that a prophet should perish outside of Jerusalem. Jesus says, “When the right number of days pass, then, indeed, I will come to Jerusalem, just like you want. I will arrive at My Father’s time. I will be given into your hands and meet the death you desire.” God’s precious prophets of the past had also been mistreated and executed at Jerusalem. Likewise it would happen to Jesus. Jerusalem was the capital city of God’s Old Testament people. Jerusalem was the center for God’s specific worship and sacrifices carried out at His Temple for the sins of the people. It truly was appropriate there that Jesus would die at Jerusalem to atone for the sins of the world—the Lamb of God who takes away all sin.

Yet it was sad that the very city, where God would rescue of His people from sin, would be the city to eject God’s salvation in Jesus, the sacrificial Lamb. The devil wants all people to reject Father, Son, and Holy Spirit. He plots for you to do so as well. Pray that your own heart, that this house of worship named St. Luke’s, that our church body named the Church of the Lutheran Confession, never become places where God’s precious Word and God’s precious salvation in Jesus are despised and rejected.

Jesus said, *“O Jerusalem, Jerusalem, the one who kills the prophets and stones those who are sent to her! How often I wanted to gather your children together, as a hen gathers her brood [chicks] under her wings, but you were not willing!* Their rejection brought sorrow to Jesus’ heart. They had been God’s special People for many Old Testament years, they had carried forward the Promise of the Savior, they were the heritage from which the Redeemer (Rescuer) Himself would be born. Now they ignored and rejected Jesus. Like a mother hen which calls her chicks to hide under her wings when harm and anger are near, Jesus wanted to save His people from sin’s destruction, but their hearts “would” not, were not willing. Sad. ----- God also wants and works to bring you o faith in Christ, to keep you in faith, and to take you to heaven. Do not push “push” God away in matters of spiritual life. Your forgiveness is in Jesus alone, no one ere else. Do not try to “push” or “boss” God in your physical life—going the way your want to go, with you yourself being in charge. Things work best in His loving and forgiving hands. He has the best solution, even for eternal death for sin. It is removed in God’s only beloved Son!

Otherwise, the sad result is: *See! Your house is left to you desolate; and assuredly, I say to you, you shall not see Me until the time comes when you say, ‘Blessed is He who comes in the name of the LORD.’* Emptiness, desolation, abandonment, is the future for those who reject Christ. The Lord departs from their hearts, lives, and future. Blinded in heart, they do not “see” Him. At His return at the End, they will then grudgingly and with regret and dismay say, *Blessed is He who comes in the name of the LORD.* They will realize how wrong they have been about Christ and now how lost they are. Sad. ----- On the other hand, for believers, these same words, *“Blessed is He who comes in the name of the LORD!”* are words of faith and joy of heart! On Palm Sunday, when Jesus entered Jerusalem riding the donkey’s colt, arriving to die and rise and rise again, the crowds shouted, *“Blessed is He who comes in the name of the LORD!”* These words will also be the shous of the believers when Christ returns at the end of time! They will be your words!—even no. Saved! Let the Lord your Savior lead you in this life and forever. Do not push Him away.

Amen! So be it!

Pastor Kanzenbach---