

THE PRAYER OF THE DAY

Lay Minister: Let us pray.

People: (In unison) O God, whose glory it is always to have mercy, be gracious to all who have gone astray from Your ways, and bring them again with penitent hearts and steadfast faith to embrace and hold fast the unchangeable truth of Your Word; through Jesus Christ, Your Son, our Lord, who lives and reigns with You and the Holy Spirit, one God, now and forever. Amen.

THE GOSPEL LESSON Luke 13:31-35

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(Jesus weeps over Jerusalem.)

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.'" (NIV)

INTRO - A couple of years ago I preached in Copper Center at the church there. There weren't many people in worship that day. Many of the member belong to the local volunteer fire department, and they had been up that night fighting the fire in a house of a member. But, more tragically, many had also been out the afternoon before in a rescue and then recovery effort. It seems, on that day in May, the River was thawing from the long winter. A man and his wife were by the River, when their dog went near the river. The man went after the dog, and fell in, and the dog and the man both drowned. Imagine giving your life for a dog. I know it was an accident, but the couple must have really cared for that dog to even begin risking the effort.

I. Please listen to what Jesus says in our lesson.

A. 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!"**

1. Jesus is lamenting over Jerusalem.
2. He has come to this capital of the country of God's chosen people trying to call them to faith in God, in His Messiah.
3. But they refused to listen to Jesus' teaching. They refuse to listen to God's love. They refused to come to Jesus.
4. Yet Jesus gave His life for these people who rejected Him.

B. Now think again about this man and his dog. Do you think if he knew that he faced death in those frigid waters he would have gone after the dog anyway. He might have cared for the dog, but he probably would not have risked his life.

1. How about Jesus. Do you think if he knew that the people of Jerusalem would reject Him, that they would not believe in him, that the ones he is trying to save

would be the ones to kill him, do you think he would still have come to this world?

2. Jesus knew of the rejection of the Jews, and the rejection of the world, and he still came, and died willingly on the cross, so He could pay for their sins and save them for eternal life in heaven.

3. That is how great God's love is. Even knowing he would be rejected, and killed, he still came to call the people to repentance, faith and the love of God.

II. I want you to know that it is not only Jerusalem Jesus came searching for.

A. While God created us perfectly, we have fallen into sin, and naturally run from the love of our Father.

1. He gives us loving direction in the commandments, but we want to follow our own ideas.

2. He calls us to gatherings of His family in worship, but other activities can seem more important.

3. He calls us to live in the peace of faith in Him, but we sometimes want to trust ourselves.

4. He calls us to seek first His kingdom, and we often seek first the possessions of this world.

B. Yet, God knows OUR sin, and He still loves us.

1. The Father, knowing our rebellion, still sent His Son, for us.

2. The Son, knowing our running from His love, still went to the cross for us.

C. And Jesus keeps calling us!

1. Today we are called to confess our sins and receive the forgiveness of God.

2. Today Jenna is called, in the waters of baptism, to faith and forgiveness and eternal life.

3. Today we are called to the family table and to forgiveness and the Lord's Supper.

III. In Jacksonville, a mother came to me about a child that was straying from healthy behavior, from God's love, from the church. It doesn't always happen this way, but the young girl heard the offer for help, she heard the love of God, She turned to the Lord, and with struggle turned her life around, and today has a good career. I recently heard that her daughter has been confirmed. Praise the Lord. I want you to know the angels in heaven rejoice when someone hears the loving call of Jesus, and turns to Him in repentance and faith and worship.

A. You are here today because God has called, and you have heard His call.

1. What a wonderful thing to know that, in spite of our rebellion and sin, God loves us.

2. What Great love that God sent His son, in love that even our sin cannot overcome.

3. What a wonderful thing to know the peace and love of God in this life, and the assurance of eternal life in heaven.

B. But, there are still people who do not know Jesus. He calls, and they run.

1. You know these people.

2. They are your neighbors, your family members, your workmates, your classmates.
 3. They don't think they need God, or God's church, or Jesus' forgiveness.
- C. Jesus has not given up calling. O Jerusalem, O America, O Alaska, O Palmer, O Jonathan, O . . . you put in the name.
1. Jesus called, knowing people would turn away.
 2. Jesus died, knowing the rebellion of the people.
 3. He offers love some would reject Him.

CONCLUSION - Instead of closing with a story, today I want to give you an assignment. Please take out the cards from your bulletins. If you know the amazing truth of God's love for you, the best thing you can do is gently, and respectfully, and lovingly, share Jesus with your friends and relatives. You can do it with loving actions, with loving words, or, you can take out the card in the bulletin and put the name of 5 people who don't know Jesus on this card, and simply pray that God would open their hearts. Maybe you will have a chance to invite them to Friendship Sunday at St. John on March 25 where we will again share God's love in Jesus. In fact, if you want I will call and invite them for you. After all, Jesus has called us, and He hasn't stopped calling them.