

Act of Worship at Home for 13th March 2022
2nd Sunday in Lent

Prayer

Journeying God, travel with us today. Accompany us through the good times of life when the sun shines, the road is flat and the view exhilarating.

Protect us like a hen with her chicks when the road becomes steep, when life becomes a struggle, when we watch loved ones in pain.

Guide us at the beginning of our life like the best kind of parent. Support us throughout our life.

Put your loving arm around us and remind us that you rose from the dead to prepare a place for us.

Journeying God, travel with us today. Amen.

Reading Luke 13 vv 31-35

At that very hour some Pharisees came and said to him, 'Get away from here, for Herod wants to kill you.' He said to them, 'Go and tell that fox for me, "Listen, I am casting out demons and performing cures today and tomorrow, and on the third day I finish my work. Yet today, tomorrow, and the next day I must be on my way, because it is impossible for a prophet to be killed away from Jerusalem." Jerusalem, Jerusalem, the city that kills the prophets and stones those who are sent to it! How often have I desired to gather your children together as a hen gathers her brood under her wings, and you were not willing! See, your house is left to you. And I tell you, you will not see me until the time comes when you say, "Blessed is the one who comes in the name of the Lord." '

Reflection

In our Gospel reading today Herod wants to kill Jesus and Jesus is warned by a group of Pharisees.

You can almost hear Jesus laughing as he says, "You go and tell that old fox, I was working yesterday, I'll be working tomorrow."

I'm not sure about who or what is being laughed at and called a "fox." On the surface it looks like Herod but maybe there's more to it. I have the feeling that the fox isn't just Herod, but the death that Herod brings. There is something about death that we just don't laugh at. But here is Jesus laughing and saying, "You go and tell that old fox, 'I've been working yesterday. I'm going to be working tomorrow.'" He doesn't just laugh at Herod, he laughs at the death he seeks to bring.

Jesus is not intimidated by death. He doesn't avoid his death or try to deny it. In fact, he seems to see everything in his life from the perspective of his death, but not just from death but from the perspective of his Resurrection. So Jesus laughs and says, "You go tell that old fox, I was casting out demons yesterday. I'll be curing the sick today and tomorrow. And on the third day, I'll finish my course."

On the third day he will rise again.

Knowing he would die and rise again set Jesus free from allowing fear to stop him doing what he had to do. Can the same be true for us too?

There is a true story about a man was ploughing manure into a field in the Spring, using a tractor and a disc plough. It was a long field. The tractor was moving at five miles an hour, and the man was bored.

It was a warm day and the man was tired. He dozed off and started to fall backwards off the tractor seat.

He woke up as he was falling and, because the tractor was an old model with an accelerator that was notched into place, the tractor just kept moving. The man fell in between the tractor and the discs and, as he hit the ground, he grabbed on to the tow bar. He pulled himself up as far as he could, but he couldn't pull himself all the way up. He just hung onto the bar with both hands as the steel discs continued moving behind him.

His body was being dragged through the mud and the manure. He held on as tightly as he could because, if he lost his grip, he would have been cut in two by the moving discs. And the tractor kept moving, ever so slowly, until it came to the end of the field hit a tree and stopped.

After an experience like that I am pretty sure you would have a feeling of absolute freedom and liberty. All the weight would be gone. You would feel the sort of freedom when a person has died and has been reborn. The sunsets are lovelier. The friendships are richer. Life is full and wonderful.

Jesus knew that he was going to die. In this passage, he looks out before him and he sees Jerusalem, "O Jerusalem, Jerusalem, Killing the prophets and stoning those who are sent to you." Jesus knows that he is going to die in Jerusalem. And yet, knowing that he is going to die does not paralyze him. It doesn't keep him from working. Instead it liberates him. "You go and tell that old fox," laughs Jesus.

"I've been working yesterday. I've been working today. I'll be working tomorrow, until the third day when my course is finished." Seeing his life from the perspective of his death and resurrection, liberates Jesus. It takes all the fear of death away.

When we view our life from the perspective of our death and rising to eternal life, we are able to look at death

as Jesus did. To smile at it and to tell death – we worked yesterday, we worked today, we will work tomorrow and we will keep on working until our death and resurrection to eternal life.

One final story. Another man had two children, ages 2 and 5. He was going through the early evening ritual one evening, getting them ready for bed – feeding them, bathing them, brushing their teeth. They finished a little early and the 5 year old asked if they could stay up and watch a little television. The father agreed.

So the children turned on the program called the Incredible Hulk. The man watched as program showed a plane crash. Out of the wreckage came the Incredible Hulk, wearing rags and picking up bits of the wrecked plane and throwing them into the air.

The man began to wonder if this was the sort of program that a 2 and a 5 year old should be watching, especially just moments before being tucked into bed. The 5 year old noticed his father's concern and turning to him pulled out the thumb from his mouth he said, "Don't worry Dad, we've seen this before and it turns out alright in the end."

Thanks to God's revelation through Christ we can say the same of life and death.

We can read the Book. We can know that it turns out alright in the end. Amen.

Hymn

Hark, my soul! it is the Lord:
'tis thy Saviour, hear his word;
Jesus speaks, and speaks to thee,
'Say, poor sinner, lov'st thou me?

'Mine is an unchanging love,
higher than the heights above,
deeper than the depths beneath,
free and faithful, strong as death.

'I delivered thee when bound,
and, when bleeding, healed thy wound;
sought thee wandering, set thee right,
turned thy darkness into light.

'Thou shalt see my glory soon,
when the work of grace is done;
partner of my throne shalt be;
say, poor sinner, lov'st thou me?'

'Can a woman's tender care
cease toward the child she bare?
Yes, she may forgetful be,
yet will I remember thee.

Lord, it is my chief complaint,
that my love is weak and faint;
yet I love thee, and adore;
O for grace to love thee more!

Prayer

God, our light and our salvation, we pray for your help, when life is a struggle and the way ahead is hard.

We pray for the people of Ukraine suffering under an uncaring regime;
those working amongst homeless refugees providing food, medical treatment, support;
Hear our prayer, loving God: we put our hope in you.

We pray for those weakened by illness, afraid of what the future may hold;
those who have lost a loved companion, whose lives are overshadowed by grief;
Hear our prayer, loving God: we put our hope in you.

We pray for those haunted by doubt and despair, facing the future with little faith;
those seeking the new life to be found in you, but holding back from total commitment;
Hear our prayer, loving God: we put our hope in you.

We pray in silence for ourselves, and bring to you our fears, our anxieties, our pain. *Silence*
God, our light and our salvation, we pray for your help, when life is a struggle, the way ahead hard.
Hear our prayer, loving God: we put our hope in you.

In the name of Jesus Christ, who set his face towards Jerusalem,
suffering and death that we might know joy and salvation. Amen.

Blessing

Journey into this week and beyond
blessed with the presence and guidance of God
filled with the perseverance and compassion of Jesus Christ
strengthened with the power and vitality of the Holy Spirit,
now and always. Amen.