

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.’”** (NIV84)

Theme: Christ’s resolutely journeyed to Jerusalem.

1. He did God’s will in the face of a threat.
2. He traveled to Jerusalem to face his death.

If you knew something bad was going to happen to you in the future, you try to avoid it. For instance, if you were told that within a week you would die in a plane crash, you wouldn’t fly for at least a week. It’s only natural for us to avoid that which would cause us trouble or hardship. People would look at you funny if purposefully did something that you knew would cause you harm.

This is the case especially if you knew that you were going to die if you went to a certain place or if you knew that someone wanted to kill you. You would do all you could to avoid situations which you could die. That is what you would do, but not Jesus. Today we see Christ resolutely journeyed to Jerusalem. He did God’s will in the face of a threat and he traveled to Jerusalem to face his death.

One day as Jesus preaching and teaching in some small towns a group of Pharisees came up to him. They said to Jesus, **Leave this place and go somewhere else. Herod wants to kill you.** By Jesus’ response we can tell that these Pharisees were not trying to be nice to Jesus. They weren’t warning him. They weren’t seriously concerned about his welfare. They were pawns of Herod—sent by him to try to

scare Jesus. Herod didn’t really want to kill Jesus. He had already killed John the Baptist, and he didn’t feel too good about that. This is not to say that Herod didn’t want Jesus dead. He wanted him gone—but he preferred not to kill him. So he tried to intimidate him. He tried to lead Jesus to think that he would die if he kept on spreading the gospel and continuing with his ministry.

Jesus knew what the Pharisees and Herod were trying to do. That is why he called Herod a fox. Like we might call someone who came up with a clever plan, a “sly fox,” Jesus knew that Herod was trying to out-wit him. Herod didn’t really want to kill Jesus, but he would if he had to. For Herod would have a hand in Jesus’s death. Pilate sent Jesus to Herod—thinking that he should deal with the situation. Herod had the chance to acquit Jesus, but, after mocking and ridiculing him, he sent Jesus back to Pilate, who had him crucified.

We too face our fair-share of enemies, many of which try to intimidate us. In other times and countries Christians face physical punishment, imprisonment, or even death because of their faith. We probably don’t have someone who threatens our life because of our faith. But we still have people who threaten us. They threaten us with the loss of our jobs if we tell someone about Christ. We are accused of hate crimes, insensitivity, or intolerance for insisting on the truth of God’s Word. People mock us and ridicule us for our faith. We face the loss of friends or the rejection of family members for believing what is found on the pages of Scripture. Some times the threats we face are out there in the open for all to see. Other are more subtle and sly—like Herod. Laws are passed that try to force us to go against God’s Word. Others are passed that tries to prohibit us from following his laws. Some people will try to persuade us away from the truth by the use of reason and logic. Others will try to convince us that the Bible is false based on Science.

We face many different enemies that come at us from many different sides. When you face your enemies, what do you do? Do you back down? Sadly, we might at times. We want to avoid confrontation. We want everyone to like us; we want to keep our reputation. We don’t want to be mocked and ridiculed. We don’t want to be fined, lose a job, or lose our friends. So when we are threatened or made fun of we often back down. We tend to keep our faith to ourselves in fear

of what others may think about us. Compared to what others face each and every day, our enemies don't pose much of a threat to us, and yet we constantly find ourselves backing down in the face of threats.

Jesus faced that threat from Herod. "Leave, or I'll kill you!" Jesus didn't back down. **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. In any case, I must keep going today and tomorrow and the next day.** Herod wanted Jesus gone. But Jesus wasn't going anywhere. Even with the threat Jesus faced, in the face of intimidation, Jesus didn't back down. He continued spreading the gospel. He went on healing people from their diseases and driving out demons. Herod could threaten Jesus all he wanted, Jesus wasn't going to stop. Even with Herod threatening his life—Jesus continued with his ministry.

That is because Herod wasn't really in charge. Sure he was the ruler of the area. And some even called him a king. But he still had to answer to God. Jesus had control over him. And Jesus wasn't going to let himself be killed until his work was complete. He wasn't going to die until he was good and ready. So Jesus could be bold in front of Herod. For he controlled Herod.

We too can be bold. For ultimately God is in control. Nothing happens to us that he does not control or allow. And he will not let anything bad happen to us. He will guard and protect us. And he will see his believers safely home. Our God is in control, so we can be bold in front our enemies. Like Christ, we can stand firm and be resolute in the face of threats.

But Jesus didn't just face threats on his life. He knew that he actually was going to die when he traveled to Jerusalem. Yet that didn't stop Jesus from resolutely setting out to face his death.

Jesus did this because **no prophet can die outside Jerusalem!** This is not to say that there were no prophets killed elsewhere. John the Baptist, for example, was beheaded in Galilee. But as The Prophet, Jesus needed to die in the most important city of Israel—Jerusalem. Jesus knew full well what was going to happen in Jerusalem. He was going to be betrayed, arrested, and put on an illegal trial by his fellow Jews. He would be mocked and ridiculed, beaten and crowned with

thorns. He would be flogged. And then he would be nailed to a cross. Jesus knew full well that this was going to happen. He knew he would be rejected and killed by those he was sent to save.

So he said, **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!** If these words sound familiar it is because Jesus said these same words on the Tuesday of Holy Week. He knew what the people of Jerusalem would do to him. He wanted to guard and protect them. He wanted to take care of them like a hen takes care of her chicks and guards them against all dangers. When there is a fire in a chicken coup or at some other point of danger, a hen will often gather her chicks under her wings. She would give up her life for the sake of her children in hopes that she might save some. That is what Jesus wanted to do. But the people of Jerusalem, as a whole, rejected him. And yet, Jesus resolutely sent out to Jerusalem. He willingly traveled to Jerusalem to be rejected and killed by those he was trying to save.

We might shy away in that instance. If we knew that we would die if we showed up at a certain place, we would probably not go there. If we knew that there was even a heightened chance that we might die, we would stay away. If we knew that someone wanted to kill us, we would stay away from that person. Even if it was for our own benefit, we probably wouldn't risk it. Most of us wouldn't risk our lives for the benefit of our own lives. Perhaps some of us might risk our own lives for those we love. We might ourselves in harms way of the sake of a family member or a good friend. What about for someone who you never met? But what about someone you didn't care for? What about someone who did you wrong?

We would often shy away. But not Jesus. He didn't shy away. We willingly died for his enemies—for those who constantly sinned against him. Sadly most of the people in Jerusalem did not care. They didn't believe in him. So Jesus left them. As he said, **Look, your house is left to you desolate.** Because they rejected Jesus, he abandoned them. They were all alone and left to fend for themselves. So it is with all people who don't follow Christ. They will be abandoned. They will have to face the devil by themselves. They are left to pay for their own sins.

Jesus also said about Jerusalem, **I tell you, you will not see me again until you say, ‘Blessed is he who comes in the name of the Lord.’**

You may remember that it was on Palm Sunday—5 days before his death that Jesus entered Jerusalem on a donkey. The people spread their cloaks and palm branches in front of him. And they shouted, **Blessed is he who comes in the name of the Lord.** The people of Jerusalem rejected Jesus. They wanted to kill him. So Jesus decided he wasn’t going to return there again until it was time for him to die. So when the time was right, when he had finished with his ministry he resolutely made his way to Jerusalem. Not backing down or shying way, but willing facing death and pain.

It was for our sake that Jesus traveled to Jerusalem. He didn’t travel there for his own sake. He didn’t let himself be arrested, tried, beaten, flogged, and killed simply because he wanted to know what it felt like. He didn’t do it to pay for his own sins. He did it to pay for ours. He resolutely set out to Jerusalem so that he save his enemies. He willingly suffered and died to become guilty of all our sins. We took all our sins upon himself, becoming guilty of everything we have done wrong. So that he could suffer through hell so that we wouldn’t have to. Jesus willingly died because he knew he would rise from the dead. And through his resurrection we can be sure that we too will rise and live forever with him.

Jesus’s enemies tried to intimidate him. He was threatened with death. Yet Jesus didn’t stop spreading the gospel and showing love to others. We too face our fair share of threats. Like Jesus, we can be resolute in obeying God’s will in the face of threats. For Jesus resolutely set out to Jerusalem where he knew he was going to suffer and die. For he resolutely set out to suffer and die for you and for me. So that we might live with him forever. Amen.