

NORTH MAIN SERMON SECOND SUNDAY OF LENT – MARCH 16, 2025

Philippians 3:17-4:1

¹⁷ Join together in following my example, brothers and sisters, and just as you have us as a model, keep your eyes on those who live as we do. ¹⁸ For, as I have often told you before and now tell you again even with tears, many live as enemies of the cross of Christ. ¹⁹ Their destiny is destruction, their god is their stomach, and their glory is in their shame. Their mind is set on earthly things. ²⁰ But our citizenship is in heaven. And we eagerly await a Savior from there, the Lord Jesus Christ, ²¹ who, by the power that enables him to bring everything under his control, will transform our lowly bodies so that they will be like his glorious body. Therefore, my brothers and sisters, you whom I love and long for, my joy and crown, stand firm in the Lord in this way, dear friends!

Luke 13:31-35

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 keep on driving out demons and healing people today and tomorrow, and on the third day I will reach my goal.’” ³³ In any case, I must press on today and tomorrow and the next day—for surely no prophet can die outside Jerusalem! ³⁴ “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, and 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.’^[a]”

THE WORD OF GOD.. Today's Scripture readings remind us of the enduring faithfulness of God. If only our faith were strong enough to trust God every moment! Through the Scriptures, we discover that God stays with us even in our doubt. Be inspired by these striking images of comfort: the Lord protects me (Psalm 27); Jesus seeks to gather us under his wings (Luke 13). Through the coming of Jesus Christ, we know firsthand the power of God's kept promises!

Today and most days we look for Security and Comfort. Somehow we seem to have moved away from calling the space where we hold gathered worship a sanctuary. We call it other names but, Sometimes there is no better word to describe what we need than sanctuary. "For he will hide me in his shelter in the day of trouble," writes the psalmist (Ps 27:5 NRSV). And when aren't we in a day of trouble? There is something appealing about providing space to withdraw from the world for a time—a place to breathe, a place to be in silence just for a while. A place to worship. A place to just be still. Worship time can be an opportunity to ask how we can provide sanctuary for others in our world as well as for us. It is a chance to practice compassion rather than division; acceptance rather than judgment. Like many of us, the writer of Psalm 27 knows trouble, as does Jesus when he is confronted by the Pharisees attempting to scare him into being quiet or, at the very least, getting out of town like our Gospel reading today tells us the Pharisees try to do. The Gospel reading from Luke 13 takes place after the Transfiguration when some friendly Pharisees warn Jesus about Herod's intent to kill him. Herod seemed to be amused about Jesus and the reports he had heard about him. And yet there was no indication he wanted to kill Jesus. In fact, as Jesus was Herod's subject, he certainly had the power of life and death over Jesus and did not avail himself of the opportunity. Throughout the Gospel of Luke, Jesus is faced with enemies. From the very beginning of his ministry, people wish

him harm. In today's reading, some religious leaders warn him that he has made an enemy of Herod, the local ruler. Yet both the psalmist and Jesus do an odd thing when faced with threats: they stay the course. Jesus tells them he has to be on his way to Jerusalem anyway, and then he laments over those in Jerusalem, longing to gather them under his wings like a mother hen. His lament is picturesque. He tells them he will continue to do his work. They refuse to be swallowed up and swayed by fear. Instead, they root themselves in God, whose steadfast love conceals and protects, whose love keeps their heads above water. Jesus reminds his followers that there is direction and purpose to his ministry, even when things are dark. The Gospel of Luke gives us a beautiful portrait of our compassionate Savior. Jesus was not "turned off" by the poor and the needy; in fact, they were a primary focus of His ministry. Israel at the time of Jesus was a very class-conscious society. The weak and downtrodden were literally powerless to improve their lot in life. We could all learn a lesson from this reading today to stay the course when we are confronted by fear. God allows fear and testing to come our way. He wants us to learn how to not respond to the pressure, and learn how to go through the difficulty without being crushed emotionally. This way of humble living, caring for "the least of these," is the way we follow Christ because "just as you did it to one of the least of these brothers and sisters of mine, you did it to me. Some of us may just say right now...I have such fear about this journey. I am not like Jesus, when someone threatens me, I run away,, There is so much going on in my life right now! I don't think I can take on a Lenten journey let alone someone threatening my life like the Pharisees did. There are people whose faith is so much stronger than mine is. How can I serve the Lord? I don't know what to do. I don't have the fancy words that would bring comfort to the hearts of people who are troubled. I can't even solve my own problems. You ask me to reach out and take your

hand. Our **Psalm for today**. So eloquent, the shining gem of all the Psalms, simply says. The lord is our light and our salvation. Take that simple statement and sit quietly in the Sanctuary and patiently wait for the light of God to help you find peace.

During the Easter Preparation season, think about what you believe makes life meaningful. Consider how much space worldly success takes up in that mental list and how living a life of transformation looks in terms of body, mind, and spirit. Last week we talked about temptation. 40 days where Satan seeks to make Jesus use his spiritual gifts for himself alone. To feed himself, protect himself and to take things for himself. Much like what the Pharisees had started to do, using their spiritual monopoly for their own gain, but Jesus has no intention of doing that. His heart is in the right place. He rejects Satan and the temptations offered him. We need to be a little bit more like Jesus and “ask what we can do to serve God better”. What temptations can we reject. We need to add one more small thing to our live of service for our church.. What can one person do.. not much but together we can do a lot..just think of what that one person named Jesus did for the world. Jesus is aware of his path to Jerusalem and is eventual death, yet he continues his ministry in spite of it and takes control of his eventual destiny. For us as we continue through the Lenten season and the journey to Easter morning it is about placing your heart into the correct place. Ordering your spiritual life around what is truly important despite any obstacles. May we learn today from Jesus’ example on the road to Jerusalem: from his determination and strength to follow God’s will; his compassion and pity for the lost; his unswerving commitment to justice and righteousness; and most of all the hope he holds out for all who will continue in discipleship with him.