

What is Your Mindset?

March 13, 2022

Our Savior's Way Lutheran Church

Pastor David Labuhn

Last week on the first Sunday in Lent and this past Wednesday in our Lenten mid-week service, we focused on temptation. Last Sunday, we meditated on the temptation of Jesus by Satan in the wilderness, and in our mid-week on Wednesday we considered our temptation in the wilderness of this world and the need to be on Christ and the cross as we travel through our lives.

The devil never gives up. He never stopped tempting Jesus even after his first three attempts in the wilderness. The devil uses evil angels and other humans as his mercenaries in the fight to capture innocent souls. Today, we see another example of the actions of Satan in our Gospel reading. This time, Satan used the Pharisees to tempt Jesus and turn Him away from the cross and our salvation. Satan acted through the Pharisees using the same war plan that he used with Adam and Eve. He lied. (Jesus called Satan the father of lies.) Satan enticed the Pharisees to convince Jesus that if He entered Jerusalem, Herod planned to kill Him. If you know the Biblical record regarding Herod, you know that Herod was curious about Jesus and he wanted to meet Jesus. You also know that when he did meet Jesus, he wanted Jesus to perform a miracle for him much like a court jester. There is no indication that Herod was planning to kill Jesus in the Biblical record. The threat to Jesus' life by Herod was a lie by the Pharisees, under the influence of Satan, to turn Jesus away from Jerusalem and the cross.

We can only speculate why the Pharisees, who were the dominant religious party of the Jewish religion of their day, would be motivated to tell this lie. Without a doubt, they did not want Jesus to come into Jerusalem, the capital city, and teach and heal as He had in the countryside. He was a threat to them and their favored positions in the Temple and their power based on legalism which allowed them to grow in wealth at the expense of others. Jesus would threaten the religious stability that they enjoyed. The Pharisees also knew that Jesus was being called the Messiah, the Savior. If this popular Savior came into Jerusalem, the people might rise up and make Him their King. This would threaten not only religious stability. It would also threaten political stability. A riot and revolt might ensue causing bloodshed and resulting in an armed response by the military. Maybe they were trying to use misinformation to entice Herod to do what they were suggesting and kill Jesus just as he had killed John the Baptist. The Pharisees hated Jesus and what He taught. He had just angered them by saying that Gentiles, who Jews viewed as the least likely to enter the Kingdom of Heaven, would be first. And they were aghast that Jesus said that the Jews, God's people, would be the last to enter the Kingdom of Heaven if at all. The Jews and especially the Pharisees saw themselves as superior to unclean Gentiles. This statement infuriated the Pharisees.

Jesus' response to the Pharisees' warning about Herod was to tell Herod that He was undeterred and would fulfill His mission in Jerusalem. And, He added, that, like the many prophets from the Old Testament, He would die, as they had, in Jerusalem, just as they had when they fulfilled their mission for God. Then, Jesus said something that was even

more detestable, He lamented over the City of Jerusalem, the capital of the nation and the seat of the religion with the Temple. He said it would be destroyed because it refused to hear Him and rejected Him. This was anathema, an abomination, a curse that Jesus was placing on the City of Jerusalem. The Pharisees were incensed that this upstart, your teacher would say such a thing. It was blaspheme because this was the City of God. Who would dare prophesy the destruction of this Holy City and its inhabitants? Yet, Jesus was the Son of God and was completely accurate in His prophetic announcement. And the Old Testament reading today pointed in exactly the same way to what Jesus had said. The prophet Jeremiah, as directed by God, foretold the destruction of the City of Jerusalem and the Temple by the Babylonians in 626 B.C. and the religious leaders and people sought to kill him for his words. The people of the Old Testament had turned away from God and chosen instead to worship idols, especially the idol god Baal. Worse, they made sacrifices of their children to this idol. Their disobedience drew the wrath of God. His patience was spent.

The Bible and history, both tell us that Jerusalem and King Solomon's magnificent Temple were both destroyed by the Babylonians under King Nebuchadnezzar in 586 B.C. as prophesied by Jeremiah. Jesus prophesied in 32 A.D. that the City of Jerusalem and the Temple built by Herod would be destroyed and both were destroyed in 70 A.D. by the Romans. Just as Jesus had prophesized. God's Son was rejected by the people of His time and once, again, God lost patience with His people.

We are in the Season of Lent. Lent is a time in which we are supposed to come face to face with ourselves and our

sin. Lent is a time when we need to admit to ourselves and sometimes to others that we have disobeyed God and turned from Him in our thoughts, words, and deeds. We are not just sinful; we need to admit that we are woefully sinful. This should be our mindset during this Season. This should be our way of thinking which acknowledges who we are and what we have done in the sight of God and our neighbors. Lent is about us being hopelessly lost in the wilderness of sin and powerless to find a way out. Yet, this is totally contrary to what our culture teaches. Our culture would lead us to believe we are basically good. Oh, we may slip up once in a while, but then, everybody has a bad day. Our individualism tells us that we can manage our own behavior. Who needs Jesus and His bloody death? And, that resurrection story cannot be proved scientifically. It, too, is simply a myth. If the truth be told, there are a lot of sinners in this world and they are bad sinners. We see them each day in our media. And you and I can point them out. When we do this, we act just like the Pharisees who pointed to the unholy, unclean Gentiles as being unacceptable for the kingdom of heaven. And, like Adam and Eve in the Garden of Eden, we tend to try to deflect attention to our own guilt and bad behavior by pointing to someone else who is far worse than we are. We, all of us, need to be mindful of God's wrath and disobedience to his Word. We have two examples in our readings today of what happens even to God's people when He loses patience with us. The state of the world right now might be a cause for us to be repentant.

Lent is a prelude to Easter just as Advent was a prelude to the birth of Jesus at Christmas. It appears to me that we get closer to the understanding of our need for a Savior in

Advent than we do in Lent. At least, during Advent, we are reminded, even by the culture around us, that a Savior is coming. Think about how you heard music about Jesus' birth in all the stores in Advent, even earlier than 40 days out. And, although there is little connection between sales and the need for a Savior, at least there was a recognition of the birth of Jesus our Savior.

Now, look at Lent, Ash Wednesday has come and gone. Some people had ashes imposed on them but they only lasted a short time and then were washed away or rubbed off. And, I haven't heard the strains of "In the Cross of Christ I Glory" or "Go to Dark Gethsemane" or "The Old Rugged Cross" playing on the loudspeakers in my local Walmart or Wegmans recently. But I did see a lot of chocolate rabbits and candies. And, when I poked around on the bottom shelf, I found one box of chocolate crosses. The mindset that we have for Lent and the most important event in our Christian faith, the death and resurrection of our Savior, is almost foreign and unknown in our culture. Easter is even being pawned off as simply a rite of spring. The idea of the need for a repentant heart and remorse for disobedience to God's Word and His Law is not part of the mindset of our culture. Now, let me remind you, we live in that culture and it rubs off. And God will only be patient for so long. We have seen that.

Now, look at the mindset of Jesus. He was not deterred by a threat from the religious leaders, the Pharisees, whether real or a lie of Satan. He was not deterred by the political implications of His teaching and His announcement that He was the Son of God and the Messiah. His mindset was toward Jerusalem and His mission of Salvation. He even hinted to the Pharisees that He knew what they are going

to do when He said that great prophets of God were killed in Jerusalem. Jesus' mindset, before His death, was to fulfill the will of His Father and go to the cross for all those who need saving; for all those sinners; for you and for me. Jesus was not disobedient and He was not deterred. He knew His mission and how important it was for the world.

So during this time of Lent this year in which we have seen, and are seeing, what may be an end to God's patience with sinful beings, what do we learn from the Word of God today?

1. Disobedience to God will be judged harshly and completely. A mindset of arrogance and self-righteousness translates to rejecting Jesus and the cross. The Pharisees and the people of Jerusalem found that to be a mistake. Rejecting Jesus and the cross implies the ability to save ourselves and that is exactly what Satan wants us to think.
2. Satan entices us to set aside the cross in exchange for the teachings of our culture which seeks to make worldly things idols and reduces God to a diminished place in our lives. Such earthly things include technology, science, consumerism, individualism, power, and wealth. Turning to these things for our salvation from sin gives the world the power of salvation and ignores the power of Jesus and the cross for salvation. This is a false and deadly hope. Satan wishes for nothing more, that we fall into the trap of doing this.
3. The road to spiritual disaster starts by ignoring the Word of God written and spoken. This was true in the time of Jeremiah, the time of Jesus, and in our times. In past times, the disaster came as

prophesied. In our times, we are waiting to see how much patience God still has with us humans or whether He is ready to pass the ultimate judgment and destroy all creation. While we say that God is slow to anger and abounding in steadfast love, God does have His limits. He does become angry and acts in wrath against sin.

What is a better mindset in Lent for us?

1. To look to Jesus as our Savior in all humility and thankfulness. Jesus looked for the people of Jerusalem to see Him in that way. If they would have done so, He would have protected them like a mother hen protects her chicks in the face of danger. Jesus gives us the same message. He is ready, willing, and able to protect us, but we must turn to Him, flee to Him for protection.
2. Grace and mercy are only from God. We cannot free ourselves from sin nor can anything in our culture do so. The cross, and only the cross, is the means of Salvation and even though it is gory and bloody, it was through that blood on the cross of an innocent Lamb of God, the Son of God, that we have been saved from destruction for all eternity.
3. Jesus exhibited the mindset of an obedient and humble servant of God. He took no glory for Himself. He is our example. We are the servants of God in this world. Our glory is yet to come. We only show the glory of God when we act on His behalf. Just as Jesus turned His face to Jerusalem and to His inevitable death for us, we need to turn our faces to the cross and the glory that is to come. Glory came to Him in His resurrection and His elevation to the right hand

of God, as we confess. His glory is our hope, in and through Him.

The prophet Jeremiah faithfully preached ***“all that the LORD had commanded him to speak to all the people.”***

(Jer. 26:8) He called the people to repentance, lest the Lord’s judgment come upon them. The violence that Jeremiah suffered for this preaching foreshadowed the cross and Passion of Christ Jesus, who suffered the judgment of God for the redemption of all people.

For Jesus ***“comes in the name of the Lord”*** (Luke 13:35) in order to lay down His life for the sins of the world. Earthly Jerusalem was blind to His gracious visitation, and it put Him to death like the prophets before Him. Yet, His sacrifice upon the cross became the cornerstone of the new Jerusalem, His Church. He visits us today in mercy in that Church with His preaching of forgiveness, to gather us to Himself within that holy city, ***“as a hen gathers her brood under her wings,”*** (Luke 13:34) for ***“our citizenship is in heaven.”*** (Phil. 3:20)

It is only the second Sunday in Lent. There are still 30 days for you to get the right mindset about this Season and demonstrate your obedience to God. There is still time to show true repentance for your sinful life and focus on your need for the grace of God through Jesus to make you right with God. May this be true for you, through the power of the Holy Spirit, that the Resurrection overwhelms you with hope and joy in the grace and mercy of your loving God and His obedient Son, Jesus. Amen.