

2 LENT FEBRUARY 28, 2010 CYCLE "C"

TITLE: JERUSALEM CALLS, COME TO THE CROSS

READINGS: Gen. 15:1-12, 17-18, Ps. 27, Phil. 3:17-4:1, Luke 13:31-35

Remember when Jesus took Peter, James and John with him up the Mountain (Mt. Tabor) and there his face and clothes became dazzling white and Moses and Elijah came and talked with him? That was Jesus' transfiguration, it marks the end of the Epiphany Season and the movement into Lent, our preparation time for Easter. It appears in chapter 9 of Luke's Gospel. Also in chapter 9, Luke makes his great transition to Jesus' steadfast determination in obedience to his Father to take his final journey. Jerusalem was calling him to come to the cross. This is the way Luke puts it: "His face was set toward Jerusalem." Lk. 9:53. Now nothing would stop him from his journey to the cross. And it is in today's Gospel that we have something most unique. Biblical scholars tell us that Jesus' words, "Yet, today, tomorrow, and the next day I must be on my way, because it is impossible for a prophet to be killed outside Jerusalem." (13:33) are probably Jesus' exact words quoted by Luke. He was determined to finish the work the Father had given him. Come to the cross, Jesus, come and save us!

So what about you and me? Have we heard the Jerusalem call? Have we begun our journey to the cross of Christ? Paul made that journey and he wants us to imitate him, for he was an imitator of Christ. He tells the Philippians and us today that those who refuse to follow the Lord are, "Enemies of the cross of Christ, their god is their belly; and their glory is in their shame; their minds are set on earthly things," for they are focused on their own greed. "But our citizenship is in heaven," Paul says, "and it is from there that we are expecting a savior, the Lord Jesus Christ." Phil. 3:18-20. It is that same Lord who earned our citizenship for us by shedding every drop of his blood on the cross.

Jerusalem calls. It is the eternal city, the holy city. It has been the center of salvation history. To her the prophets were drawn, in her the Temple was built, destroyed, re-built and destroyed again. From her came God's rule, good kings and bad. To her were drawn all people of God Christians and non-Christians alike. It is Jerusalem where ancient Israel found its strength and faith and it was here that Jesus was crucified and died for the sins of all mankind. It is Jerusalem which has beckoned Jesus, the city where the peace and beauty the love and holiness of God should permeate all things. But it is here that Jesus cries out in his great lament, "Jerusalem, Jerusalem the city that kills the prophets and stones those who are sent to it," then he pours out his love as he says, "How often have I desired to gather your children together as a hen gathers her brood under her wings, and you were not willing!" Lk. 13:33-34.

How gentle, how affectionate, how lovingly he opens his arms in forgiveness to this city of God that is so unwilling to accept his love. He describes himself with

the image of a mother hen protecting, sheltering and gathering her children in a warm and loving embrace under her wings. Jesus could have used other images such as the powerful eagle of the book of Exodus. "I bore you on eagle's wings." Ex.19:4, or the crafty leopard prowling through the pages of Hosea, or maybe the lion the king of beasts so often used in the book of Psalms. But no, he chooses a gentle, humble hen to portray his love and affection. And at the same time knowing full well that a cross awaits him.

Luke says that his Pharisee friends, possibly friends like Joseph of Arimathea, warned him, 'get out of here' Herod wants to kill you. But no, his face was firmly set on Jerusalem and the fulfillment of his Father's work. "Go tell that fox," a better name for us today might be "weasel," "for me, 'Listen, I am casting out demons and performing cures today and tomorrow, and on the third day I finish my work'". Lk.13:32. Herod had already chopped off the head of John the Baptist at a wild party. He wouldn't think twice about doing the same to Jesus. But Jesus knew Herod, with his insatiable thirst for power and life of total debauchery, would not understand or accept Jesus. Jerusalem calls. My journey is set. I go to the cross where my Father sends me to complete the mission I was given.

There is a painting by a French artist, Paul Flaudin, entitled *Christ Mourns Over The City*. But the city on the canvas is not Jerusalem. It has tenements, spurting flame from blast furnaces, and a pall of smoke. Cathedrals and churches are there, too, but they are dark as the day dies. Christ stands on a cliff looking down on the city. His gaze is fixed, standing motionless, sad, tearfully compassionate. 'How often have I desired to gather your children together as a protective and loving mother hen gathers her brood under her wings, and you were not willing!'

Jesus speaks the very same words to each one of us today. Are you willing? Does Jesus' loving invitation mean anything to you? Have you heard the call of Jerusalem during this Lenten season? Are you looking toward the cross? Come, O Christian and gather under the out-stretched arms of your Lord Jesus on his cross and answer the Jerusalem call. **Amen.**

Pastor Barney