



What Is Your Jerusalem?
Genesis 15:1-12, 17-18; Luke 13:31-35
Sunday, March 17th, 2019
First Federated Church of Peoria, Illinois
The Rev. Dr. Forrest Krummel, Jr.

Text: At that very hour some Pharisees came and said to him, “Get away from here, for Herod wants to kill you.” (Luke 13:31)

Today’s gospel lesson is puzzling; Pharisees coming to Jesus and warning him not to go to Jerusalem because Herod wants to kill him? Why the warning? Could it be that some of Jesus’ followers were Pharisees? Maybe. Could it be that Jesus himself was a Pharisee? Possibly. As we learned in the Monday bible studies, we don’t really know much about the historical Jesus. We know the Christ of faith.

It could also be, though, that the Pharisees that came warning Jesus didn’t want him to go to Jerusalem because of the ruckus that he would cause, thus threatening their standing. After all, when he did go into Jerusalem, Luke tells us that he went in with a parade and that he took a whip as he turned over the tables of the money-changers in the Temple.

This possibility got me to thinking, “What is our Jerusalem?” Where would we prefer Jesus not to go in our lives. We are sorely tempted to be inoculated with Jesus - only getting enough of Jesus to making us immune to catching a full-blown case of taking Jesus seriously. We wish to take him seriously when it suits us but not so seriously as to inconvenience us.

This past week as Russel and I met with Dr. Cory Ganschow in preparation for this morning we talked about how we can arrange the chancel area to seat their chorale. In the course of the discussion Russell noted that I always like to have the baptismal font front and center, especially when it is inconvenient because I believe that our baptism should inconvenience us. Our baptism reminds us that we are on the road to taking Jesus seriously. The decisions we make, the values that we hold, and the actions we take should be affected by our commitment to taking Jesus seriously. “Show me your works, and I will show you your faith” the Letter of James reminds us.¹ What you believe is betrayed by your actions.

The late Robert Munger delivered a sermon while he was at the University Presbyterian Church in Berkley, California entitled, “My Heart, Christ’s Home”. In it he used the metaphor of Christ taking up residence in our heart. A little house cleaning is in order. There is the study, the place where we train the mind, the dining room where we feed our body and spirit, the living room where we spend our leisure hours, the rec room where we gather with the company we keep and entertain - cut loose.

¹ James 2:17

But there is also one more room, or rather the hall closet, to be exact. An order emanates from it like there is something dead inside. This is our Jerusalem. The place that we declare off-limits, out-of-bounds to Christ. Jesus is welcomed everywhere but here.

For some of us it is the way we spend our money. Money is neither innately good or bad. It just “is”. It builds hospitals to the benefit of a community or it can buy admission to major universities to the detriment of meritocracy. In the synoptic gospels of Matthew, Mark, and Luke Jesus the real turning point is when Jesus turned over the tables of the money-changers in the Temple. He hit them in the pocketbook and thus crossed the line between “preaching and meddling.” Our values are most clearly revealed in the way we spend our money, individually, as a corporation, a nonprofit, or a congregation.

“Where your treasure is, there will be your heart also,” Jesus told his listeners in the Sermon on the Mount.² The opposite is also true; where your heart is, there will also be your treasure. Follow the money, investigators say. “It’s all about the money”, Troy Ave(nue) rapped.

For others of us Jerusalem is our home. I will never forget the conversation that I had with a wife and daughter of a man as we talked about his funeral. When I asked about their best memory of this man I was met with a curious silence. Finally the wife broke the silence saying, “I know that you have to say nice things about my husband because he was a well-respected professional as well as a church and civic leader. But that is not who he was at home.

For still others, Jerusalem is the business world. We do not want Jesus to see the business decisions that we make, the corners that we cut, the rules that we bend or break.

All of us have a Jerusalem, that place where we do not want Jesus to go; that place where we like to think that God does not see or know about. But here’s the thing; Jesus goes to Jerusalem. God knows that which we try so desperately to hide. All of this may seem like bad news, but it is also good news, gospel. Jesus went to Jerusalem where he was celebrated one day, betrayed, denied, and crucified before the week’s end. But the story did not end there. We are journeying toward Easter where the best news is found. The news that the women first heard so long ago that still gives hope today.

Jesus also travels to our own individual Jerusalem, the Jerusalem of our individual hearts. He cannot be deterred. He will not be denied. His love is too great.

Amen.

² Matthew 6:21