### The Lament over Jerusalem

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Luke 13:31-35 3/16/2025

Grace Rohrer

***31****At that very hour some Pharisees came and said to him, “Get away from here, for Herod wants to kill you.”****32****He said to them, “Go and tell that fox for me,[*[*a*](https://www.biblegateway.com/passage/?search=luke%2013%3A%2031-35&version=NRSVUE#fen-NRSVUE-25543a)*] ‘Listen, I am casting out demons and performing cures today and tomorrow, and on the third day I finish my work.****33****Yet today, tomorrow, and the next day I must be on my way, because it is impossible for a prophet to be killed outside of Jerusalem.’****34****Jerusalem, Jerusalem, the city that kills the prophets and stones those who are sent to it! How often have I desired to gather your children together as a hen gathers her brood under her wings, and you were not willing!****35****See, your house is left to you.[*[*b*](https://www.biblegateway.com/passage/?search=luke%2013%3A%2031-35&version=NRSVUE#fen-NRSVUE-25546b)*] And I tell you, you will not see me until the time comes when[*[*c*](https://www.biblegateway.com/passage/?search=luke%2013%3A%2031-35&version=NRSVUE#fen-NRSVUE-25546c)*] you say, ‘Blessed is the one who comes in the name of the Lord.’ ”*

**Prayer for illumination**

Merciful God, open us to your Word and your way. Help us to seek you, your truth, and the message you intend for us today. Amen.

There are several stories in the Bible where Jesus expresses sorrow. Today’s Gospel reading is one of them, describing how Jesus looked upon Jerusalem with a heart full of grief.

Two other stories of Jesus’ sorrow are: 1. When Jesus wept upon seeing His beloved friend Lazarus dead…

2. The night Jesus was arrested, when Judas approached Him with a kiss, Jesus said to him: "Judas, are you betraying the Son of Man with a kiss?" (Luke 22:48). Regardless of Judas' motives and intentions, Jesus must have felt deeply disappointed, helpless, and sorrowful in the face of such betrayal by someone He had a revolutionary bond with.

When Jesus cried out, "Lazarus, come out!" His beloved friend Lazarus was resurrected and walked out of the tomb. This is something beyond our capability. However, the other two stories are more relatable to us—when Jesus faced suffering that humanity could not change, He did not perform miracles or use power to avoid it.

First: Jesus mourned for Jerusalem, but He did not change reality. He saw that Jerusalem, the center of Jewish religious life, was filled with people who rejected God and were unfaithful. They had killed prophets like Him before and were now preparing to kill Him. He sang a lament for this city.

Second: On the night Jesus was arrested, He saw the soldiers push Judas aside, and He stopped His friend from using violence to protect Him. When His disciple drew a sword to resist the arrest and cut off the right ear of the high priest’s servant, Jesus rebuked the violence, saying, "No more of this!"

The high priest’s servant was not the enemy; the swords, clubs, and weapons were the true enemies. Jesus, full of mercy and love, touched the servant’s ear and healed him. Jesus surrendered Himself and turned to the city that had killed prophets and stoned the messengers of God. He mourned for this city and sang a lament.

For disciples who are determined to follow Jesus and emulate His example, this passage is not just a sorrowful story—it is, in fact, a terrifying one. Who can truly follow in the footsteps of Jesus Christ? Can we open our arms to those who seek to kill us? If those who come to arrest us are injured, will we heal them? Will we prevent the use of force to protect our friends?

Today’s world, much like the first century, is filled with disappointment and a sense of powerlessness. Elections have passed, yet we are still talking about the events before and after. The daily news is often not news at all—there is fake news, media catering to the strange appetites of the masses, and many perplexing, disappointing, and frustrating stories!

In a polarized political and social climate, enemies are clearly defined—we believe in the existence of "us" versus "them." This mentality creates an "other," a non-belonging group.

During election campaigns, this divisive rhetoric continues in a vicious cycle, and no one knows when it will change. Regardless of race, whether extreme or moderate, blue, red, green, deep green, or light green, at least one thing people can agree on is that the government has problems, and no one can fix them.

Reading today’s Gospel with modern language: "Washington, Washington (or: Taipei, Taipei), you who kill prophets and politicians, who stone those sent to you, whom we have elected."

Since Jesus did not resolve the problems of Jerusalem, I believe we also cannot resolve the problems of Washington or Taipei. However, if we grieve for the suffering people as Jesus did, He will speak to us.

Let’s be honest—most people do not tune into political programs to gain a deeper understanding of issues. Instead, they watch because they already know what will be said before anyone speaks.

Modern writer Marilynne Robinson, a professor of creative writing in Iowa City and a Pulitzer Prize winner, has made significant contributions to promoting humanitarianism. She is described as the soft morning sunlight, a gentle and quiet prophet. She has written numerous essays on John Calvin and observes modern culture, human mindsets, and social phenomena. Many media outlets and politicians seek her advice. She states: "Our society and nation are sick. But with what illness?"

In her essays, she identifies "fear" as a major crisis in today’s politics, democracy, and culture. Why is fear such an important theme? Why does she highlight this phenomenon? Whether a country is Christian or not, democracy cannot be built on fear—it must be based on people’s willingness to do good. Fear is dangerous to any democratic nation.

Her essays have two simple points: 1. Modern people are full of fear. 2. Fear is not a Christian habit.

The basic assumption about humanity: we want to do what is right, and society values doing what is right. But when conspiracy theories arise and distort reality, making good appear evil and others seem sinister, such an assumption undermines democracy.

Robinson explains: Why does faith care about democracy? She says: "Because we believe people are made in the image of God." This understanding is foundational to Christian theology—it respects God and honors people. Democracy aligns with this logic; religious humanism is its highest form. It emphasizes that all people bear God's image, and God's love includes respecting humanity.

Robinson asks: Can we at least agree that the greatest danger facing our country today is fear?

We constantly feel unsafe, no matter how much wealth we accumulate, how strong our military is, or how tight security is at airports, concert halls, and museums. Can you imagine? Statistics show that over a thousand churches in America have chosen firearms as their crisis management solution. The idea that "we can never be too safe" makes people feel more insecure.

Most threats exist only in our imagination. People panic at the mere sound of a closing door, fearing an enemy that is not there. Only by facing real threats can we gain strength. Shouldn’t we be more concerned about people’s feelings of insecurity?

When groups create conspiracy theories, fabricate enemies, and believe reality threatens them without questioning their logic, their conviction becomes their strength. They unite in hostility and even resort to violence.

People naturally want to throw stones at their enemies, curse them, and even attack them with weapons. But what does Jesus do? He sings a lament: "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."

Jesus spread His wings, leaned forward, turned His face toward the one who betrayed Him, and allowed him to kiss Him. He healed the wound of the one who came to arrest Him. He wept for humanity that continually stumbles. We do not dare to say we can do as Jesus did, but at the very least, during elections and debates, let us not treat each other as targets.

Reflecting on ourselves, can we tolerate people with different opinions? In a normal political process, they express their views, we cast our votes, and if we lose, we say, "This is democracy." I have lost in a meaningful and fair election.

People are created in the image of God. This faith calls us to assume that others also seek to do what is right and act with goodwill. When Jesus faced those who rejected and betrayed Him, He did not attack them; instead, He opened His arms, healed, and forgave. At the same time, He continued moving forward in a dark world.

On the second Sunday of Lent, Here are two themes for us to practice and reflect on ourselves during this week::

First, let us assume the goodwill of others; lay down your swords and weapons; open your hands to embrace friends and strangers who bear the image of God. Do not look over your shoulder—let go of fear.

Second, meditate on and practice today’s responsive reading from Psalm 27. We only read one verse, but if we read the whole passage carefully, it would be more complete.

This psalm is called " “Triumphant Song of Confidence,”  It vividly portrays the various emotions of humanity and how we waver between faith and doubt in different moments. It describes how we hide in anxiety and fear and how we struggle with trusting God.

How and why do we hide?

* We hide to protect ourselves from difficult people, painful emotions, and challenging situations.
* We avoid difficult things—harsh realities, complex problems, and people, concepts, or cultures that are hard to understand—so that we do not have to invest more effort or commitment.
* We evade opportunities—fleeing from God’s call to step onto the stage of life, avoiding the journey of becoming better people, shrinking from the risk of expressing our views, and escaping new challenges and responsibilities.

We hide and pray as the psalmist says, **“Lord, hide me in the secret place of Your tent.”** Yet even there, we wonder why it feels like God has disappeared from our lives.

The ending of Psalm 27 marks a shift. Perhaps after a good night’s sleep, the psalmist wakes up renewed with faith and energy. Or maybe he realizes how small his life truly is. Perhaps some injustice stirs his anger, making it impossible to remain silent any longer. Whatever the inspiration, in the end, he reaches out to those of us who are still hiding!

He encourages us to step out together in faith. God's **“goodness”** is found in **“the land of the living”**—not in a place of hiding. It is a journey from hiding to stepping forward in confidence.

The psalmist repeatedly calls us to **wait for the Lord.** **Be strong and take heart!** Both the psalmist and our God are waiting for our faithful response.

If we practice this, then on Easter day, the Lord who gave up everything and walked the path of the cross will look upon you with a face full of joyful grace. This is the safest choice.