

*This message was delivered by Elder Mary Bielen to the People of Prayer of the Tontogany Presbyterian Church on the second Sunday of Lent, March 17, in the year of our LORD 2019. It is based on Luke 13:31-32:*

At that very hour some Pharisees came and said to him,  
"Get away from here, for Herod wants to kill you."  
He said to them, "Go and tell that fox for me,  
"Listen, I am casting out demons and performing cures today and tomorrow,  
and on the third day I finish my work.  
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.'  
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!  
See, your house is left to you.  
And I tell you, you will not see me until the time comes when you say,  
"Blessed is the one who comes in the name of the Lord.' "

### **Luke 13. 31-35: On the Road to Jerusalem**

#### **Jesus Comes**

He comes in the midst of threats against his life; as the Pharisees call out their warning to him, and possibly their own wishes: "Herod is plotting to kill you," they say. The violence of misguided and misused kingly power—authoritarian and self-seeking power— masked as leadership, but underneath it, is dishonesty and fear---a fear that brings about more violence— like Herod, beheading John the Baptist, earlier in Luke's Gospel.

**And we come with Jesus.** Just as Jesus came into a world of violence, we, too, have come into a similar world. Violence is all around us. It calls out to us. Just listen to the news for one day and it is right there—it's there in some story. Even if we don't want to read about it, or watch it, or listen to it, images of violence make their way into our lives. And we can't

make all the violence go away. No. Not by ourselves. **So, we come to journey with Jesus to Jerusalem—the place where they plot to kill prophets.**

### **Jesus Stands**

Jesus stands his ground, after hearing the Pharisees' claim of violence being planned by Herod. "Go tell that fox," Jesus says to them, "I'm not finished yet; I have more work to do." In the Old Testament, a fox represented destruction; and in the Jewish dietary laws, a fox was considered "unclean." Even in the Hellenistic thinking of the time, a fox was thought to be "sly and unprincipled." Jesus knew what he was up against. "NO," says Jesus, "NO fox will get in my way." Jesus still has work to do—his ministry is one of reconciling the world and bringing healing to a groaning creation. "What will happen, will happen, in God's appointed time—in three days from now" Jesus says. Then Jesus will finish his work.

**And we stand with Jesus.** Our work is not finished, either. We, too, have each been called to a vocation—called as partners with Christ—in mending and reconciling our broken world. We each have some part to play. And we still have work to do, for our work is far from finished. We stand with Jesus, in our own brokenness, knowing that our strength comes from the Lord. Jesus stands with us even if we are not always faithful. **So, we stand with Jesus on the way to Jerusalem. In our own brokenness we stand. Like Jesus, our work is not finished yet.**

## Jesus Laments

He knows the fate before him. He knows what's ahead on the journey. He knows what he will face in Jerusalem. The city has a reputation for turning away from prophets—with a blind eye and a deaf ear— even stoning them and killing them. More violence. As he looks back on his ministry, he is brokenhearted, and disappointed that more people have not embraced the call to a new humanity. This new way of living and being, that Jesus is ushering in, is not based on social customs, and not on who's in and who's out. This new life, lived in the Spirit of God, is something quite different. The lowly shepherds and his mother Mary, as a peasant girl, saw the light and embraced it. They knew. The prodigal son in Jesus's parable, he knew. He saw the light. But, many people have not, thinks Jesus. And now Jesus knows what he will be facing—an horrific act of violence on the cross.

**And we lament with Jesus:** We do this especially during this season of Lent. We take stock of our lives and where we are in our journey with Christ. We consider our faithfulness to Christ's mission in the world. We lament that we fall short of our own expectations for ourselves. We realize we are sinners. Like sheep, we have all gone astray. **So, we lament with Jesus on the road to Jerusalem. We lament for what could have been.**

## Jesus Remembers

As Jesus laments, he recalls speaking in the synagogue in Nazareth. He used the words of the prophet Isaiah to explain that the Spirit of God had anointed him “to bring good news to the poor, to proclaim release to the captives, and recovery of sight to the blind.”

**And we remember.** Yes, we remember these words as well. And who are the poor, and who are the captives, and who are the blind, in spirit, but us. We realize that we are in need of the transformation that only Jesus can bring. Then we will proclaim the richness of life, a freedom from guilt, and a new vision for the gift of life in Christ. **So, we remember with Jesus on the road to Jerusalem. We remember Jesus' parables and his sermons, his words of wisdom. We remember that we are the poor, and the captive and the blind.**

### **Jesus Desires**

Yes, Jesus wanted to gather the children of God together as a hen gathers her brood under her wings. What a beautiful image of God's loving comfort and protection and God's desire to bring humankind together. What can compare?

**And we desire:** Yes, we desire to be gathered together as God's brood, one in the Spirit, being loved and protected under the wings of God. But then something happens when we are close together. The image of Christ as a mother hen becomes blurry. We forget. We disagree. We fight. We lose sight of what we have in common. We grow impatient with one another, and we become unkind to each other. **So, we desire with Jesus on the road to Jerusalem. We desire to be gathered together with Jesus, just as a mother hen loves, protects, and cares for her brood.**

## Jesus Waits

He waits to gather us together at the foot of his cross. He waits to gather us with his mother and the women beating their breasts in grief. He waits to gather us with Simon of Cyrene, the cross bearer, and the two criminals to the right and the left of him. He waits to gather us with the Roman centurion declaring the innocence of Jesus. Jesus waits to gather us all together, as his children.

**So we wait with Jesus. We wait on the Mount of Olives:** We wait with Jesus knowing that he will pray, “Father, if you are willing, remove this cup from me; yet not my will, but your will be done.” We wait wishing there could be another way. We wait with our questions, our humility, our lament, our silence, and our prayers.