

### **Jerusalem, the one that kills the prophets.**

Herod Antipas was the ruler over the provinces of Galilee and Perea (an area east of the Jordan River). In our Gospel today, we find some Pharisees coming to Jesus and asking Him to “*Leave here, and go away! For Herod wants to kill You,*” (Luke 13:31). Asking Jesus to “*leave here,*” would indicate that Jesus was still traveling through one of these two provinces.

Why some of the Pharisees would come to Jesus with this warning has been interpreted in various ways, however, the most likely answer is that the Pharisees are guilty of malice and hypocrisy; the motive for their warnings about Herod’s evil intents may be to turn Jesus from His appointed path, to keep Jesus from completing God’s plan of salvation - a plan they have already rejected “*for themselves*” when they rejected the baptism of John (Luke 7:30). It is also possible that they simply wanted to scare Jesus out of their surroundings. If the Pharisees were speaking out of one of these hostile motives, then were Jesus to heed their warnings, He would be a false prophet who seeks to avoid the suffering and martyrdom of the prophets before Him (cf. Luke 11:47-52). But if He ignores their warnings, then He faithfully continues His ministry, even though He knows it will lead directly to Jerusalem and the spectre of the cross.

Jesus sends the Pharisees back to Herod with the message that He will continue His work as Servant of the Lord till He reaches His goal. <sup>32</sup> *He answered them, “Go and tell that fox, ‘Look! Today and tomorrow I am driving out demons and working healings and on the third day I shall be perfected!’* <sup>33</sup> *Nevertheless I must be on My way today, tomorrow and the next day, because it is impossible that a prophet should perish outside of Jerusalem.* <sup>34</sup> *“Jerusalem, Jerusalem, the one that kills the prophets and stones those who have been sent to it! How often I have wanted to gather your children together, as a hen gathers her chickens under her wings, but you have not been willing!* <sup>35</sup> *Look! Your house is abandoned to your disadvantage. I also tell you, you certainly will not see Me until the time comes when you say, ‘Blessed is He who comes in the name of the Lord!’”*

Jesus calls Herod a “fox.” This term was used by Jewish rabbis as an epithet for a crafty or sly person. Herod will not determine the outcome of Jesus’ life. Jesus knows that He will die where true prophets have died before: in Jerusalem (11:47-51). Jesus is speaking figuratively when He refers to His goal as being reached *on the third day*. Christian readers of this gospel cannot see this as anything but a reference to His resurrection on the third day.

How sad that Jesus should die in Jerusalem! He dearly wanted to gather the inhabitants of that sacred city under His protecting care. But speaking directly to the city, Jesus utters those sad words: “*but you have not been willing.*” The “house” that Jesus says “*is abandoned*” may refer to the spiritual bankruptcy of the temple and its worship. Or perhaps it is a veiled hint of the coming destruction of the city by the Romans.

Jesus closes His message to Jerusalem with words quoted from Psalm 118:26, words used by the Jews as part of their liturgy on great festival days. The disciples would shout these very words when Jesus entered the city of Jerusalem as the humble King on Palm Sunday (Luke 19:38). In a more far reaching sense, they refer to the final advent when all the world will recognise Jesus as the One who comes in the name of the Lord not as Saviour but as judge.