

5th May 2024 at 9.00 am and 10.30 am services

JESUS LAMENTS OVER JERUSALEM: I HAVE LONGED TO GATHER YOU ... BUT YOU WERE NOT WILLING

Sermon preached by The Revd Dr Tony Martin delivered at Cromwell
Presbyterian Church



READINGS:

Philippians 3:17–4:1

**17 Join together in following my example,
brothers and sisters, and just as you have us
as a model, keep your eyes on those who live**

as we do. 18 For, as I have often told you before and now tell you again even with tears, many live as enemies of the cross of Christ. 19 Their destiny is destruction, their god is their stomach, and their glory is in their shame. Their mind is set on earthly things. 20 But our citizenship is in heaven. And we eagerly await a Saviour from there, the Lord Jesus Christ, 21 who, by the power that enables him to bring everything under his control, will transform our lowly bodies so that they will be like his glorious body.

Closing Appeal for Steadfastness and Unity

4 Therefore, my brothers and sisters, you whom I love and long for, my joy and crown, stand firm in the Lord in this way, dear friends!

Luke 13:31-35

Jesus' Sorrow for Jerusalem

31 At that time some Pharisees came to Jesus and said to him, “Leave this place and go somewhere else. Herod wants to kill you.”

32 He replied, “Go tell that fox, ‘I will keep on driving out demons and healing people today and tomorrow, and on the third day I will reach my goal.’ 33 In any case, I must press on today and tomorrow and the next day—for surely no prophet can die outside Jerusalem!

34 “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, and you were not willing. 35 Look, your house is left to you desolate. I tell you, you will not see me again until you say, ‘Blessed is he who comes in the name of the Lord.’”

SENTENCE FOR THE DAY

Rend your hearts and not your garments; turn back to the Lord your God: who is gracious and compassionate, long-suffering and abounding in love. Joel 2:13

INTRODUCTION

Jesus lived a dangerous life.

And, equally, any prophet of the Lord should expect no less than Jesus; as evidenced by all those who preceded him.

I wonder what kind of employment you have ... or had ... during your working life?

How would you feel if you received workplace gossip ... that a colleague ... or your manager ... has it in for you ... anxiety, fear, resolution, confidence, be dismissive?

I wonder how you would all feel ... if a noted personal enemy ... who only ever wanted your professional ruin ... approached you and said, **“It is over ... click click ... you are dead ... you better leave now ... because you are going into the ... workplace meatgrinder”**.

It wouldn't be very pleasant would it, especially if you thought your attitude and ... workplace performance ... were excellent ...

and further you enjoyed your employment ... thinking it is a vocation ... not merely a job.

You might also think that you have not finished your job yet ... you have uncompleted projects, you have so much to offer ... you can add real value to the organisation ... but it is not willing.

What am I going to do ... what can I do? This is awful.

So, if you dwell a little on that thought, then you might possibly begin to appreciate the context that Jesus lived and worked in.

I have titled my sermon '**Jesus' lament over Jerusalem: I have longed to gather you ... but you were not willing'**

So, Jesus was in Perea, which was ruled by Herod Antipas, son of Herod the Great.

You see the Pharisees wanted to get Jesus back into Judea ... where the religious leaders ... could watch him ... and ultimately trap him.

Now, Herod had been perplexed by our Lord's ministry ... and was afraid that John the Baptist ... whom he murdered ... had come back from the dead

Luke 9:7–9, Now Herod the tetrarch heard about all that was going on. And he was perplexed because some were saying that

John had been raised from the dead, 8 others that Elijah had appeared, and still others that one of the prophets of long ago had come back to life. 9 But Herod said, “I beheaded John. Who, then, is this I hear such things about?” And he tried to see him.

In fact, at one point, Herod wanted to meet Jesus so he could see him perform a miracle! (Luke 23:8)

But it appears that Herod’s heart ... was getting harder ... for now he threatened to kill Jesus.

And the warning ... that the Pharisees gave ... was undoubtedly true ... or Jesus would not have answered as he did.

And don’t you find it remarkable ... that our Lord ... was not afraid of danger.

I believe it is clear that Jesus followed a “divine timetable” ... and nothing could harm him ... until his appointed time.

Jesus was doing the will of the Father ... according to a predetermined schedule.

John 7:30 At this they tried to seize him, but no one laid a hand on him, because his hour had not yet come.

John 8:20 He spoke these words while teaching in the temple courts near the place where the offerings were put. Yet no one seized him because his hour had not yet come.

John 13:1 It was just before the Passover Festival. Jesus knew that the hour had come for him to leave this world and go to the Father. Having loved his own who were in the world, he loved them to the end.

So, you see there was a divine timing ... which Jesus was aware of ... and that timing guided his thinking and actions.

It had been decreed from eternity that the Son of God ... would be crucified in Jerusalem ... at the Passover (1 Peter 1:20; Rev. 13:8).

And even Herod Antipas could not hinder the purposes of God.

Quite the contrary, our Lord's enemies ... only helped fulfil the will of God.

And did you notice that ... Jesus used sarcasm ... in his reply?

He compared Herod to a fox, an animal that was apparently not held in high esteem by the Jews.

Known for its cunning ... the fox was an appropriate illustration ... of the crafty and sinister Herod.

Jesus had work to do ... and he would accomplish it.

After all, Jesus walked in the light ... see John 9:4; 11:9–10 ... and foxes went hunting in the darkness!

And it is my painful experience ... that those who seek to hinder or stop the work of God ... often work in darkness.

And Jesus went onto say about nation: **“It cannot be that a prophet perish out of Jerusalem”.**

And this parallels ... what he had said ... to the scribes and the Pharisees ... earlier on in Luke 11:47–51,

47 “Woe to you, because you build tombs for the prophets, and it was your ancestors who killed them. 48 So you testify that you approve of what your ancestors did; they killed the prophets, and you build their tombs. 49 Because of this, God in his wisdom said, ‘I will send them prophets and apostles, some of whom they will kill and others they will persecute.’ 50 Therefore this generation will be held responsible for the blood of all the prophets that has been shed since the beginning of the world, 51 from the blood of Abel to the blood of Zechariah, who was killed between the altar and the sanctuary. Yes, I tell you, this generation will be held responsible for it all.

The nation not only ... rejected God’s loving invitation ... to his feast, but they even killed the servants ... who brought them the invitation!

And so ... we will understand that our Lord’s heart was grieved ... as he saw the unbelief and rebellion around him.

And Jesus broke out in a lamentation over the sad plight of the nation.

I believe it was a sob of anguish ... not an expression of anger.

You see ... Jesus compassionate heart was broken.

The image of the hen and her chicks ... would be a familiar one ... to an agricultural people.

The hen gathers her chicks when she sees danger is coming.

But, and did you notice ironically ... the Pharisees told Jesus that he was in danger ... when in reality they were in danger!

You will notice that in this lament ... Jesus was addressing the whole nation ... and not just the Pharisees ... who had tried to provoke him.

You see the people had been given ... many opportunities to repent ... and be saved ... but they had refused to heed his call.

Now the word “House” refers both to the house of Israel ... and to the temple ... the house of God ... both of which would be “left desolate.”

And in AD 70 ... just as Jesus had warned ... the city and temple ... were destroyed ... and the people were scattered.

But ... and here is grace ... that mercifully sometimes follows judgement ... there is a future for Israel, says Jesus.

The time will come when their Messiah ... will return ... and be recognised ... and be received ... by the people.

And they will say, “**Blessed is he that cometh in the name of the Lord**”.

Now you might recall ... that some of the people ... would use these words at Jesus’ “triumphal entry” into Jerusalem (Luke 19:38) ... but the words would not be fulfilled ... until his coming in glory (see Zech. 12:10; 14:4ff; Matt. 24:30–31).

So, Israel’s house will be left desolate.

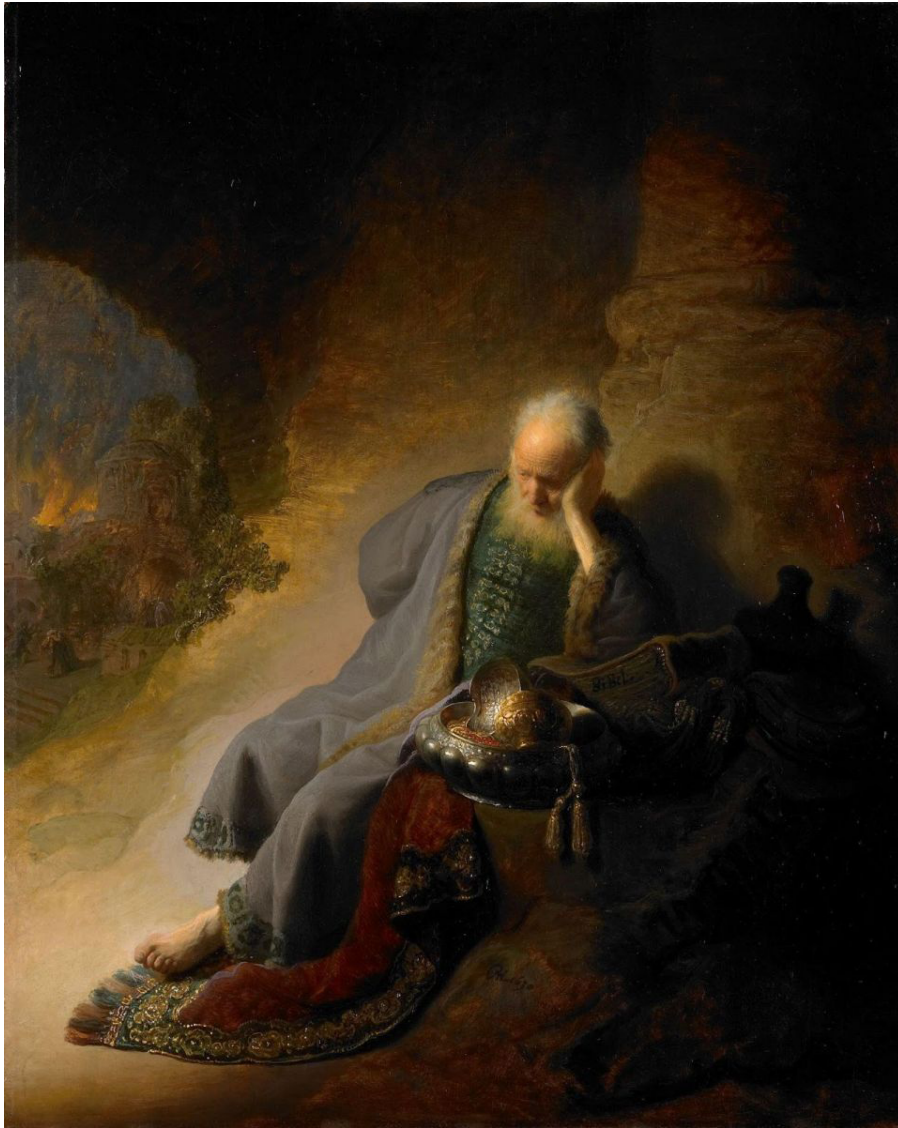
The nation will have no king nor priest, nor temple, nor sacrifice, nor city.

Now let us consider more carefully two matters:

firstly, Jesus’ lament over Jerusalem and,

secondly, the final result, when a nation, or an individual, persists in rejecting God ... and the inevitable outcome.

FIRSTLY, JESUS' LAMENT OVER JERSULAEM



I believe the tender address ... shows Jesus was deeply concerned ... about the final fate of the city.

He described Jerusalem as habitually rejecting, ... even killing God's messengers ... be they prophets or others.

Yet even so ... Jerusalem was not rejected out of hand.

The Son of God would often have gathered her children together, but they would not come.

I feel there is such tenderness in the imagery ... of the hen and its chicks.

This is not anger ... but heart-breaking love. Can you see that?

And the responsibility of the people ... for their fate ... is driven home with the final words ... **you would not!**

And do you not feel a shiver go down your spine ... because you should!

Now, I am reminded of a song that is sometimes sung in churches ... 'Will you come and follow me'

Will You Come and Follow Me

If I But Call Your Name?

Will You Go Where You Don't Know

And Never Be The Same?

Will You Let My Love Be Shown,

Will You Let My Name Be Known,

Will You Let My Life Be Grown

In You And You In Me?

Will You Leave Yourself Behind

If I But Call Your Name?

Will You Care For Cruel And Kind

And Never Be The Same?

Will You Risk The Hostile Stare

Should Your Life Attract Or Scare?

Will You Let Me Answer Prayer

In You And You In Me?

**Will You Let The Blinded See
If I But Call Your Name?
Will You Set The Prisoners Free
And Never Be The Same?
Will You Kiss The Leper Clean,
And Do Such As This Unseen,
And Admit To What I Mean
In You And You In Me?**

**SECONDLY, LET US CONSIDER THE
RESULT WHEN ... A NATION ... OR AN
INDIVIDUAL ... PERSISTS IN REJECTING
GOD, THE END IS INEVITABLE. IT IS
PREDICTABLE.**



Well, I hope you can see the nation invited the final result.

Is it too much to say that when a nation ... or an individual ... persists in rejecting God ... the end is inevitable?

So, Jesus says **your house is forsaken**.

OK ... many scholars hold the “house” to be the temple ... but I believe it is equally Jerusalem as a whole.

The important thing is ... it is **forsaken**.

God no longer dwells there: that is the final disaster.

And Jesus goes onto say ... the city will see him no more ... until it greets him in the words of Psalm 118:26,

Blessed is he who comes in the name of the Lord.

Jesus' return in splendour ... will ultimately draw from Jerusalem ... this recognition ... however unwilling ... of his Messiahship.

SO ... I NOW ASK YOU ... HOW CAN ONE CONCLUDE ... SUCH AN EXPOSITION ON THIS PASSAGE?

We do not need to have a PhD ... in sociology of religion ... to realise we live in an age of rampant unbelief in ... and support for ... the Christian faith ... and its ethical values.

Let me ask you to explain ...

why so many people have stopped going to church?

You may be aware ... there is a new sociological category for them ... called the 'dechurched'

and why do many of them lament the loss of confidence ...

the church has ... in the Gospel ... that once shaped the Western world ...

and the church's loss of confidence ... in its historic ethical values.

I have found Tom Holland's recently published block buster book ... called [Dominion: how the Christian revolution remade the world](#) ... very helpful.

A review of the book summarises Holland by saying:

Christianity is the most enduring and influential legacy of the ancient world, and its

emergence the single most transformative development in Western history.

Even the increasing number in the West today who have abandoned the faith of their forebears, and dismiss all religion as pointless superstition, remain recognisably its heirs.

Seen close-up, the division between a sceptic and a believer may seem unbridgeable. Widen the focus, though, and Christianity's enduring impact upon the West can be seen ...

What do you think God's mind is ... on the matter?

Perhaps the words of Christ speak to us today:

**... how often I have longed to gather your children together, as a hen gathers her chicks under her wings, and you were not willing.
Luke 13:34**

You will perhaps agree that ... it would be easy to make a parallel of Jerusalem in Jesus' time ...

with contemporary New Zealand ...

But despite what I have just said ...

I caution you, however, ... in using such an approach ... stridently.

I conclude by saying 'Hear what the Spirit is saying to the Church'.

Maybe ... instead ... we should look ...

first to ourselves ...

and consider if Jesus is in fact ...

speaking about us.

**Will You Come and Follow Me
If I But Call Your Name?
Will You Go Where You Don't Know
And Never Be The Same?
Will You Let My Love Be Shown,
Will You Let My Name Be Known,
Will You Let My Life Be Grown
In You And You In Me?**

AMEN