

"Jesus and the Use of Force"

Text: Luke 13:31-35

May the love of God the Father fill you with wonder; may the sacrifice of God the Son fill you with gratitude; and may the indwelling of God the Holy Spirit fill you with faith, hope, and love. Amen.

Dear Fellow Christians: When our American forefathers severed the bonds that had tied them with Great Britain, they included the explanation for their actions in the Declaration of Independence with these now-famous words: *"We hold these truths to be self-evident, that all men are created equal, that they are endowed by their Creator with certain unalienable rights, that among these are life, liberty and the pursuit of happiness."*

Christians have often struggled with these words, primarily because it is difficult to find proof for these assertions in the pages of Holy Scripture. Where in the Bible, for example, does it say that God has *"endowed all men with certain unalienable rights"* – rights that include *"liberty and the pursuit of happiness"*? While God's Words stand forever, man's words do not.

So it ought not surprise us that several of the pillars of our form of government today seem to be shifting ominously. One of the most notable is the changing perception of just what is meant by "liberty." The term certainly didn't mean in 1776 what it has come to mean to many today. In fact it meant both more and less. While then it meant freedom from government intervention in the day to day lives of citizens, today "liberty" is understood by many to allow for the exact opposite – government control of whatever government claims it has a right to control, while at the same time including in "freedoms" the suspension of many of the essential laws and rules that have guided civilizations since the dawn of time. We focus on one changing aspect this morning – the use of force. Any use of force in our day must be justified in the public eye before it is allowed. A teacher can no longer use force to bring students into conformity with the rules. Homeowners need to know what force they can and cannot use to protect themselves, even within the confines of their own homes. Even parents can be called before government officials to justify their use of force in the discipline of their children – discipline commanded by God himself.

One root problem that is causing this shift is the growing perception that all evil can be appeased or pacified through peaceful, nonviolent, non-forceful means. There is a growing belief that there is almost nothing so

evil that it cannot be either simply tolerated or reasoned with amicably. While the World Trade Center attacks dealt a setback to this rather silly notion, it is again gaining traction in our society.

Christians recognize such ideas as nonsense because the Bible clearly teaches otherwise. There are indeed evil forces in the world that must be resisted, both physical and spiritual – brute enemies of God that cannot be reasoned with or gently disarmed. God's enemies are pictured in the Bible as wolves, lions, dragons and snakes – enemies that must be met with a force that is beyond man's power to provide – which is exactly why we needed God to send a Savior – *a Force of One*. For further instruction and guidance we turn to our text for this morning, found in the 13th Chapter of Luke's Gospel:

Luke 13:31-35 At that very hour some Pharisees came and said to him, "Get away from here, for Herod wants to kill you." ³² And he said to them, "Go and tell that fox, 'Behold, I cast out demons and perform cures today and tomorrow, and the third day I finish my course. ³³ Nevertheless, I must go on my way today and tomorrow and the day following, for it cannot be that a prophet should perish away from Jerusalem.' ³⁴ O Jerusalem, Jerusalem, the city that kills the prophets and stones those who are sent to it! How often would I have gathered your children together as a hen gathers her brood under her wings, and you would not! ³⁵ Behold, your house is forsaken. And I tell you, you will not see me until you say, 'Blessed is he who comes in the name of the Lord!'"

These are the inspired words of our God, generously and miraculously recorded and preserved for mankind down to this very moment. That you and I might gain the full benefit that God intended for us through the study of these words, so we pray, **"Sanctify us by your truth, O Lord. Your word is truth."** Amen.

In examining **Jesus and the Use of Force**, we find the following:

- 1) Jesus would not be forced by his enemies**
- 2) Jesus himself would force the confrontation with his enemies**
- 3) Jesus today does not conquer his enemies by force**

Evil today is kind and friendly in much the same way the Pharisees were kind and friendly to Jesus in our text. At first glance, the naïve

in particular might imagine that the Pharisees were here giving evidence of that "spark of goodness" that, according to society, resides in every human being. It certainly appears, on the surface, that they were coming to Jesus' aid by warning him of Herod's desire to kill him: ***At that very hour some Pharisees came and said to him, "Get away from here, for Herod wants to kill you."***

Did Herod want Jesus dead? Maybe. It seems odd, however, that Herod would have such hatred for a man who had done nothing to anger or threaten him. You will recall that Herod hadn't even wanted to kill John the Baptist, who *had* accused and condemned him for his incestuous relationship with Herodias. It was Herodias who had asked for John's head. In fact a short time later, when Pilate sent Jesus to Herod, he "was glad" because he hoped to see some "magic tricks" performed by Jesus.

What then did Herod want, and why did the Pharisees say what they did? Both were using a kind of force here against Jesus; they were trying to impose their power, their will, on the Son of God. If Herod cared at all, he was probably hoping to force Jesus out of his jurisdiction. It's possible he felt threatened by Jesus' popularity with the people. The Pharisees, on the other hand, had a very definite plan. They were trying to force Jesus and his entourage into Jerusalem. Why? Because that was their killing ground.

Jesus himself saw through their plan and sent word back to the Pharisees that he knew exactly what they were doing: ***"Nevertheless, I must go on my way today and tomorrow and the day following, for it cannot be that a prophet should perish away from Jerusalem."*** The Jews wanted Jesus dead – obviously. The problem for them lay in the fact that their power was greatly diminished the farther Jesus wandered from Jerusalem. The Pharisees that were sent to Jesus in our text were the hounds sent to herd Jesus into Jerusalem, where he could be slaughtered.

Again, Jesus recognized their plan – their none-too-subtle display of force – and simply refused. He indicated this with his answer: ***"Go and tell that fox, 'Behold, I cast out demons and perform cures today and tomorrow, and the third day I finish my course.'"*** In other words, Jesus is letting Herod know that he is not subverting his realm, he is healing its people, and that he would continue to do so until his work was completed. He is telling the Pharisees that not only does he know what they are trying to do, he's going to keep doing what he came to earth to accomplish.

How interesting and encouraging to see that Jesus' enemies were absolutely powerless to hinder or prevent Jesus from doing exactly what he wanted to do. We see evidence of this fact in the second part of our text, where we learn:

2) Jesus himself would force the confrontation with his enemies.

Jesus always knew both *that* he would die and *where* he would die. He never for a moment doubted that he would one day force a final confrontation with his enemies, and that such a show of force was necessary. The point that Jesus is making here is that he would force this issue according to his own agenda and at a time that he would determine. You remember his words in John 10:18: ***"No one takes my life from Me, but I lay it down of Myself. I have power to lay it down, and I have power to take it again. This command I have received from My Father."*** This also explains why Jesus in our text said, ***"Nevertheless, I must go on my way today and tomorrow and the day following, for it cannot be that a prophet should perish away from Jerusalem."*** The Jews clearly wanted him in Jerusalem, for there they believed they had a better chance at killing him. Ironically, Jesus fully intended to go to Jerusalem to suffer and die for the very men who wanted to murder him. Humanly speaking, the Jews had history on their side. More prophets had been killed in and around Jerusalem than anywhere else in Palestine. Time after time God had reached out to his stubborn, backsliding people, and time after time they had slapped away God's hand by killing his messengers. Jesus knew he would be no different.

So what did he do? He went to Jerusalem. Why? You will recall that our theme centers on Jesus' use of force. Jesus recognized that there was evil in the world that could only be defeated by a show of pure power or force. He knew that sin and Satan had to be met with a show of unrelenting strength and that the enemies of God and man had to be crushed. They could not be reasoned with or mollified. They would not be won over by patience, love, or mercy. Force was met with greater force, and the final momentous battle was waged on the cross of Calvary. It was anything but kind and gentle.

Society today misunderstands Christianity in that they regard it primarily as a demonstration of compromise and permissiveness. A true Christian today, in the eyes of the world, is one who accepts

people the way they are and refuses to condemn the actions or opinions of anyone else.

Christians don't believe that because Jesus didn't believe that. Think of how Jesus met the money-changers in the temple – not with a kind word but with a whip. Think of his burning words of condemnation to the Pharisees, and how he denounced and condemned their beliefs with stark, unequivocal words. Remember how he gently but firmly condemned the woman by the well who was living with a man who wasn't her husband, and how he told the woman caught in adultery: **"Go and sin no more."** Sin is always condemned in the Bible – including every single sin you and I have ever committed. In fact if compromise was part of God's will, if compromise with sin were even possible, why would God have sent his Son, Jesus, to suffer as he did? If sin could be overlooked, why didn't God do exactly that? Jesus forced the final confrontation with his enemies because he knew there was no other way for us to be saved.

3) Jesus today does not conquer his enemies by force

So then what about faith and salvation? Jesus used pure, irresistible force to defeat sin and Satan. Does he then also now force saving faith upon human beings? Obviously not. Consider his words in our text: **"O Jerusalem, Jerusalem, the city that kills the prophets and stones those who are sent to it! How often would I have gathered your children together as a hen gathers her brood under her wings, and you would not! ³⁵ Behold, your house is forsaken. And I tell you, you will not see me until you say, 'Blessed is he who comes in the name of the Lord!'"** Jesus used force against his enemies. He used force in winning man's salvation. Yet he does not now force that salvation upon any human being. He calls, invites, beckons, but man still has the terrible power to refuse that call to life.

Note this well. While it is certainly true that **"God our Savior wants all men to be saved"** and **"The Lord is not willing that any should perish, but that all should come to repentance,"** it is also true that God's will changes with man's refusal. Theologians refer to this change as the difference between the *antecedent* and *subsequent* will of God. The antecedent will of God refers to God's will prior to man's rejection. So Jesus willed both Peter and Judas to be saved. God's subsequent will for Judas, however – given his rejection and unbelief – was that justice prevail. So too in our text he offers this stark warning not only to rebellious Jerusalem, but to all who reject him in unbelief: **"See! Your house is forsaken!"**

How is it then that you and I are now called children of God and enjoy his grace and favor, when we certainly have not earned or merited such grace any more than did Judas or the unbelieving Jews in Jerusalem? God's grace – his undeserved love – is the only answer we can give. You and I now stand holy and righteous in God's sight, our sins forgiven and our names written in the Book of Life only because God loved us and made it so. Can we ever again feel deprived, unfortunate, or underprivileged? On the contrary we sing the praises of our God for the gift of eternal life and his grace in Jesus Christ, our Savior – who is the Force, the Power, that secured our rescue. We count ourselves blessed beyond measure that the Holy Spirit has worked saving faith in our hearts, to the end that we can and will one day shout the final words of our text when our Savior returns: **"Blessed is He who comes in the name of the LORD!"** Even so, come quickly, Lord Jesus, our Strength, our Savior. Amen.

Scripture Readings

^{ESV} **Jeremiah 31:31-34** "Behold, the days are coming, declares the LORD, when I will make a new covenant with the house of Israel and the house of Judah, ³² not like the covenant that I made with their fathers on the day when I took them by the hand to bring them out of the land of Egypt, my covenant that they broke, though I was their husband, declares the LORD. ³³ But this is the covenant that I will make with the house of Israel after those days, declares the LORD: I will put my law within them, and I will write it on their hearts. And I will be their God, and they shall be my people. ³⁴ And no longer shall each one teach his neighbor and each his brother, saying, 'Know the LORD,' for they shall all know me, from the least of them to the greatest, declares the LORD. For I will forgive their iniquity, and I will remember their sin no more."

^{ESV} **Hebrews 5:1-10** For every high priest chosen from among men is appointed to act on behalf of men in relation to God, to offer gifts and sacrifices for sins. ² He can deal gently with the ignorant and wayward, since he himself is beset with weakness. ³ Because of this he is obligated to offer sacrifice for his own sins just as he does for those of the people. ⁴ And no one takes this honor for himself, but only when called by God, just as Aaron was. ⁵ So also Christ did not exalt himself to be made a high priest, but was appointed by him who said to him, "You are my Son, today I have begotten you"; ⁶ as he says also in another place, "You are a priest forever, after the order of Melchizedek." ⁷ ¶ In the days of his flesh, Jesus offered up prayers and supplications, with loud cries and tears, to him who was able to save him from death, and he was heard because of his reverence. ⁸ Although he was a son, he learned obedience through what he suffered. ⁹ And being made perfect, he became the source of eternal salvation to all who obey him, ¹⁰ being designated by God a high priest after the order of Melchizedek.

^{ESV} **Luke 13:31-35** At that very hour some Pharisees came and said to him, "Get away from here, for Herod wants to kill you." ³² And he said to them, "Go and tell that fox, 'Behold, I cast out demons and perform cures today and tomorrow, and the third day I finish my course.' ³³ Nevertheless, I must go on my way today and tomorrow and the day following, for it cannot be that a prophet should perish away from Jerusalem.'" ³⁴ O Jerusalem, Jerusalem, the city that kills the prophets and stones those who are sent to it! How often would I have gathered your children together as a hen gathers her brood under her wings, and you would not! ³⁵ Behold, your house is forsaken. And I tell you, you will not see me until you say, 'Blessed is he who comes in the name of the Lord!'"



ST PAUL LUTHERAN CHURCH

BISMARCK, NORTH DAKOTA

ST. PAUL EVANGELICAL LUTHERAN CHURCH

2510 E. Divide Ave. Bismarck, ND 58501

Parsonage and Office: (701) 223-4885 Cell: (701) 425-5483

Website: www.bismarcklutheran.org

Mark Johnson, President Angela Pfennig, Organist

Michael Roehl, Pastor

The Fifth Sunday in Lent – March 21, 2021

The Opening Prayer by the Pastor

The Opening Hymn – 18 (Red Hymnal)

"Lord We Come Before Thee Now"

The Order of Service – Supplement page 12ff. (Brown Hymnal)

The Scripture Lessons: (Printed on the back page of this bulletin)

The Old Testament Lesson: (Jeremiah 31:31-34) There are many references to "covenants" in the Old Testament. A covenant is an agreement between two parties. At times something will be required of each side in a covenant, while at other times one party will bind himself to a course of action unilaterally, meaning nothing at all is required of the other party. The gospel represents a one-sided covenant between God and mankind. We hear of that one-sided gospel covenant in our first reading.

Psalm 38 (Supplement page 39) (Brown Hymnal)

The New Testament Lesson: (Hebrews 5:1-10) One of the great blessings of the Book of Hebrews is the fact that it ties so many Old Testament activities to Christ, pointing out the symbolism or meaning of the things that God required in the Old Testament. All pointed to Christ, the culmination and fulfillment of God's promise to rescue mankind. In this lesson we learn how the Old Testament priesthood was a picture or type of Christ.

The Confession of Faith -

The Apostolic Creed (Brown Hymnal page 15)

The Pre-Sermon Hymn – 35 (Red Hymnal)

"Songs of Praise the Angels Sang"

The Sermon – Luke 13:31-35 (Printed on the back page of this bulletin)

"Jesus and the Use of Force"

The Offertory – (Supplement page 16 insert)

The Post-Sermon Hymn – 764 (Brown Hymnal)

"God of Grace and God of Glory"

The Prayers

The Benediction

The Closing Hymn – 798 (Stanzas 1 & 4) (Brown Hymnal)

"God, We Praise You"

Silent Prayer

Welcome! - We warmly welcome any visitors who might be with us this morning and invite you to join us every Sunday at this time. St. Paul is a congregation in fellowship with the Church of the Lutheran Confession (CLC) – a conservative Lutheran synod with churches and missions throughout the United States and around the world. We are glad you are here. Thank you for letting us share the Word of God with you. Please record your visit in our Guest Book, and come again!

Attendance – Sunday (32) Average (30) Wednesday (20)

This Week at St. Paul:

Today	-9:00 a.m.	– Sunday School and Bible Class
	-10:00 a.m.	– Worship Service
	-11:00 a.m.	– Fellowship Hour
	-11:15 a.m.	– Church Council Meeting
Wednesday	-5:45 p.m.	– Confirmation Class
	-7:00 p.m.	– Midweek Lenten Service
Next Sunday	-9:00 a.m.	– Sunday School and Bible Class
	-10:00 a.m.	–Worship Service w/Holy Communion
	-11:15 a.m.	– Fellowship Hour

CLC News – Grace of Sleepy Eye has called member Debra Mayhew to teach grades K-8 in their school. Redeemer of Sister Lakes has called Pastor David Naumann.

CLC Youth Camp – This year's summer camp in Pillager, MN is scheduled for June 13-19, 2021. Because of spacing restrictions in Minnesota, attendance is currently limited to those entering 9th through 12th grade in the Fall of 2021. Should restrictions be lifted, those entering 6th-8th grade will also be included. Initial registration date for Grades 9-12 will be on Palm Sunday, March 28, at 3:00 p.m. Central. Because of COVID uncertainties, no registration fee will be due at that time. Cost to be paid at a later date will be \$180 per camper. The initial registration date and time are so specific because space is limited, and it is first-come-first-served.

Church Council Meeting – The Church Council is scheduled to meet during the fellowship hour this morning. One agenda item will be whether or not to hold our annual Men's Breakfast on Easter Sunday morning. If you have thoughts on this, please share them with a Council member before the meeting.

Midweek Services – Our midweek Lenten services conclude this week with a study of the virtue of *patience*.