

Divine Necessity

Luke 13:31-35

Trinity Lutheran – Kearney, Missouri
February 21, 2016 – Second Sunday In Lent



Grace to you, and peace, from God our Father, and from our Lord and Savior, Jesus Christ. Amen. Undoubtedly you've heard someone say that "the devil is in the details." Well, I'd like to look at the implications of that statement as it applies to this morning's Gospel. But instead of looking for the devil, I'd like us to see how it's God who's in the "details" – for indeed, as students of Holy Scripture, we must realize that throughout the Bible from beginning to end, sometimes even the smallest, most insignificant words frequently carry the most weight. So, in this morning's text there were some Pharisees who had come to Jesus to warn Him that Herod was seeking to take His life. We're not told why they came to tell Jesus these things, but whatever the reason, it's important to see how Jesus answered them. He said: "Go, tell that fox, 'Behold, I cast out demons and perform cures today and tomorrow, and the third day I shall be perfected.' Nevertheless I *must* journey today, tomorrow, and the day following; for it cannot be that a prophet should perish away from Jerusalem."

"Nevertheless," said Jesus, "I *must*" continue My journey onward to Jerusalem – a journey whose end would spell a hideous, horrific death by whipping, scourging and crucifixion. This little word, "*must*," means that ultimately even King Herod, with all his power and might, would not be able to turn Jesus away from His chosen path. Even Jesus' own devoted followers – who cringed with fright at the very thought of what Jesus had told them was about to happen – would not be able to deter or sway Him. In fact, our Lord Christ said to Peter when he attempted to stop Him from going to Jerusalem and His crucifixion: "Get behind Me, Satan! You are an offense to Me, for you are not mindful of the things of God, but the things of men." And, as you may recall from last week's Gospel, not even forty days of starvation in the wilderness followed by the trickery of Satan himself, could get in the way of what Jesus knew He *must* do.

Jesus alone is "the Lamb of God who takes away the sin of the world." And this Lamb cannot be sacrificed just anywhere. It *was necessary* that He travel to Jerusalem to present Himself for this sacrifice. It *was necessary*, and so Jesus had no choice but to

continue on toward that ancient, notorious city – the city of sacrifice and worship – the city that "kills the prophets and stones those who are sent to her" by God. This journey was a Divine necessity for Jesus, "for," as He states here in this text: "it cannot be that a prophet should perish anywhere except in Jerusalem." It was necessary. And because it was necessary, this thing had to come to pass precisely as it had been written about in the Holy Scriptures!

Remember that word, "*must*," dear Christian. Contemplate the depth of its meaning, and meditate on it throughout this coming week – for as hard as it might be to believe, this one little word tells the entire story of your relationship with God. It speaks of who you are, what you've done, and of course, what you've failed to do. It tells of God's love and compassion even in the face of your dismal failures – and it directs your gaze to the amazingly high price Jesus willingly and gladly paid on the cross to redeem all of us from our sinful condition. To be sure, all of salvation history is bound up quite simply in this tiny, divinely-inspired, word, "*must*."

Just consider for a moment how easy it is to abuse and twist the meaning of this word on account of our own sin. You children, doesn't it frost you to think God really wants you to honor and obey your father and your mother – and that no matter how much it might put you out, the truth is you have no other option? You *must* obey because God demands it in His Law – and because a Godly punishment awaits you if you refuse. You wives, how often have you failed to fully comprehend what it means when the Scriptures speak of how you *must* submit yourself to your husband? Life in pagan America would like to teach you that you're answerable to no one – and I have no doubt you'd like to believe it. Hence I think you can see how the word "*must*" at times is a heavy burden for all of us to carry.

But you husbands haven't escaped the weight of God's Law either. Perhaps you're the most miserable, self-centered lot of all, for God tells you that you *must* love your wife and family in the very same way Christ loved the Church – even to the point of Him giving up His own life to save Her! What this means that you husbands are to spend every moment of your life in the service of another – your wife and family –

that you **must** be willing to sacrifice your entire self – your desires, hopes, dreams and ambitions – all for the sake of the family which God has seen fit to give you – and this you **must** do, even if no one ever takes notice – or much less, shows you gratitude in return your undying love and devotion.

According to the Law, each of us **must** live our lives with complete, undivided devotion to our Lord. You are to love **no one** and **no thing** more than you love Him. You **must** be content with the life, income, and position God has given you. And woe to him who casts the green eye of envy at their neighbor's possessions! You **must** speak well of your neighbor, no matter how badly he speaks about you! You **must** defend him against slander and gossip, no matter what kind of low-life he might be! You **must** forgive him and do good to him, no matter what he's done to, or hasn't done for you. Under the scourge and rod of the Ten Commandments, the list of what you **must** do goes on and on and on – and each requirement God throws upon you preaches an entire sermon about how miserably we've all failed to do what God has said we **must** do. But like children, we have no other option! We **must** obey because God demands it – and because punishment awaits all who refuse. In all this the word "**must**" becomes for us a saddle which cannot be shaken off – a bit in our mouths that can't be spit out.

But what you also need to know is that precisely because you cannot do what God has said you **must** do, Christ, then, **must** do it for you. That's why Jesus said: "I **must** journey today, tomorrow, and the day following; for it cannot be that a prophet should perish anywhere but Jerusalem." Our Lord Christ **must** go up to Jerusalem because you and I need Him to go there. Everything Jesus does, from the moment of His birth to His cruel death, He does out of necessity – your necessity. Do not be mistaken, dear children of God, Christ came and comes to save you for one reason and one reason only – because He loves you. And it's due to the fact that He loves you that the Scriptures ascribe to Him great joy as He busies Himself with the terrible work of crucifixion. And this He **must** do out of necessity. He **must** do it because we are not able – and because there is no one else in all of heaven and earth who can do it!

Jesus had no choice other than to keep going because it was necessary for the Son of God to draw our humanity into Himself – for we, by reason of our sin, have separated ourselves from Him – and have continued doing so right up to this very moment. It was

necessary for Jesus to suffer the temptations of the devil in the wilderness – that He be tempted in all ways even as we are – because we so easily and willingly give in to temptation. Unlike us, however, Jesus remained without sin through it all. And this, too, was of greatest necessity, because He was living life in our place. He had to live a life of perfect obedience to the Father's will because our lives are so riddled through and through with imperfection and willful disobedience.

And so, in today's Gospel we see Jesus enduring yet one more temptation for our sake. He's tempted to turn from His course and abandon the work the Father had sent Him to do. Some Pharisees had come to Him, saying: "Leave this place and go somewhere else. Herod wants to kill you." Jesus replied, "Go, tell that fox, 'Behold, I cast out demons and perform cures today and tomorrow, and the third day I shall be perfected.' Nevertheless I **must** journey today, tomorrow, and the day following; for it cannot be that a prophet should perish anywhere but Jerusalem." Jesus was tempted, but He didn't fall or falter. In all this He remained faithful and flint-faced as He continued His journey toward the goal of the cross. By His actions in today's text, Jesus is once again preaching to us, saying: "Do not fear those who can destroy the body, but Him who is able to destroy both body and soul in hell. Make it your concern to obey God above all things – to fear Him more than you do the threats and plots of man."

"I **must** keep going," said Jesus, and that's exactly what He did. He did everything necessary to procure your salvation. Reaching the goal at Golgotha, He willingly paid the price to redeem you from your sin. With His very own body and blood – the very same body and blood many of you will partake of here at this Altar in just few moments – Christ fully and completely appeased the wrath of God in our place. So, as a Christian, when someone asks you if you have hope of being saved, you can and **must** give a positive answer. You can and **must** say, "**Yes**, I am saved! **Yes**, I am an heir of heaven! **Yes**, I belong to God through the life and work of my Savior – who knew that if I was to be saved He **must** be the One to do it." And do it He did – because He knew **must** do it. He **must** do it for you! Amen!

And now that peace of God, which passes all understanding, will keep your hearts and minds in that one true faith in Christ Jesus, unto life everlasting. Amen.