

“An Appointment with Death”—Luke 13:31-33

The text for this sermon, the theme of which is, “An Appointment with Death”, is Luke 13:31-33 → *At that very hour some Pharisees came and said to Jesus, “Get away from here, for Herod wants to kill You.” 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. 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.’”* This is the text.

Dear Brothers and Sisters in Christ Jesus:

Appointments. They seem to be both a blessing and a curse in our lives. They are a blessing as they testify to a purpose in life with so many activities or tasks within which we have the opportunity to be a blessing to others. They can motivate and provide direction for you especially during those days when its hard to motivate. Yet, there are those days when we would like to throw the calendar away and wish everyone and everything would leave us alone!

What do you think it would be like if you had and appointment with death? Would you keep it? It would actually be different than a person with cancer asking the doctor how much longer he has to live. It would also be different

than the military serviceman would know he will be deployed to the front lines where the threat of death is the strongest. The times when an appointment with death causes a horrifying reality is when murder takes place either by premeditating the killing of others and/or oneself. No matter when, how or who, death for humans should always be a struggle for all involved since death is not natural to life and is never a friend.

Throughout His public ministry Jesus spoke about and referred to His appointment with death. Many times He would refer to His “hour.” (cf. John 2:4; 7:30; 8:20; 13:1; 17:1) In our text He refers to it as His *course* or His goal.

While traveling to Jerusalem Jesus was “warned” by some Pharisees about Herod Antipas’ desire to kill Him. (Verse 31) This was the Herod who had imprisoned John the Baptizer and later beheaded him at the request of a girl who danced for him at his party. (cf. Matthew 14:3-11) It seems that Herod’s deadly deed had come back to haunt him when he heard about Jesus. Matthew 14:1-2 says that *Herod the tetrarch heard about the fame of Jesus, and he said to his servants, “This is John the Baptist. He has been raised from the dead; that is why these miraculous powers are at work in Him.”*

Why the Pharisees, who were also plotting to kill Jesus, would warn Him of Herod’s deadly plot seems rather odd. At any rate, Jesus responded by staying committed to His divine “appointment” or mission. He told them in

verse 32 of our text: *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, Herod’s threats had no affect on Jesus’ actions. He would “stay the course” for that which His Father had sent Him no matter what danger was involved. God, not Herod, or even those Pharisees, would determine the time and place of His death. He would simply continue day by day to be faithful to God the Father’s purpose.

Jesus’ appointment with death was in submission to God’s written Word, most clearly brought out in Isaiah 53 which describes God’s suffering Servant: *He was despised and rejected by men . . . as one from whom men hide their faces He was despised, and we esteemed Him . . . stricken, smitten by God, and afflicted. But He was pierced for our transgressions; He was crushed for our iniquities; upon Him was the chastisement that brought us peace, and with His wounds we are healed . . . the LORD has laid on Him the iniquity of us all. He was oppressed, and He was afflicted, **yet He opened not His mouth** . . . He was cut off out of the land of the living, stricken for the transgression of My people . . . Yet it was the will of the LORD to crush Him . . . His soul makes an offering for guilt.* (cf. Isaiah 53:3-10)

It is interesting that during the unfolding of Jesus’ “trial” the only one to whom He did not open His mouth was King Herod. When Pilate sent Jesus to

Herod he was very glad, for he had long desired to see Him, because he had heard about Him, and he was hoping to see some sign done by Him. Before King Herod, the chief priests and the scribes, who should have known the written promise of His death, Jesus made no answer . . . He opened not His mouth. So Herod with his soldiers treated Him with contempt and mocked Him. Then, arraying Him in splendid clothing, he sent Him back to Pilate. (cf. Luke 23:8-11)

However, before Pilate, who did not have the written knowledge of God's Word, Jesus did open His mouth and told him in John 19:11 → *You would have no authority over Me at all unless it had been given you from above.* This was happening according to God's appointed time and in His appointed manner. This appointment was scheduled by God and He never misses an appointment!

Jesus' death was not some senseless act of sin which affected a lot of people. Rather, His death was for the purpose of dealing with all those senseless acts of sin and affects the whole world! While the Sanhedrin tried to manipulate Jesus' death and Pilate tried to navigate his way through Jesus' death and Herod made sport of Jesus in preparation for His death and the crowd demanded His death, **God orchestrated His death for them and for you!** While they demonstrated the depth of their sin God demonstrated the depth of His love for them!

The same is true for you and me. When we function with a disregard of God's Word in our lives as His Church, when we refer to the depths of our sin rather the work of Christ to define who we are and how we act, when we function as if we, rather than God, are in control, when we refuse to listen to His Word proclaimed by His servants, Hebrews 6:6 says it is like *crucifying once again the Son of God to our own harm and holding Him up to contempt*. This was the force of Jesus' statement in verse 33 of our text: *It cannot be that a prophet should perish away from Jerusalem*. Unfortunately such sinful rebellion has flourished so much in God's Church, what else would one expect but for them to crucify Jesus!

It was for just this reason that Jesus kept His appointment with death. Jesus emphatically stated that He would continue His direction until He would reach this goal, the salvation your soul! Jesus chose to give His life into death as the punishment for your sin! No one took His life away from Him. cf. John 10:18) Why would He do such a thing for a bunch of ungrateful, spiteful, rebellious, Word-ignoring, self-serving people? Romans 5:6,8 tells us why: *While we were still weak, at the right time Christ died for the ungodly . . . God shows His love for us **in that while we were still sinners**, Christ died for us*. Jesus loves sinners and has provided the motivation for us to live differently according to His Word through repentance of sins and faith in His Person &

Work!

Don't you have an appointment? Isn't it an appointment with His forgiveness given to you through His Word and Sacrament in this place regularly? Because Jesus kept His "appointment" with death, He rose again and has given you forgiveness of your sins, salvation and a new life in the Holy Spirit. This "appointment" affects all your other appointments which bring you into relationships and activities within which you can testify to the Gospel of Jesus Christ by words and actions. Through it the Holy Spirit empowers you to act as the Church in the world instead of acting like the world in the Church, as you receive His Word gladly and strive to live it in your daily life! Amen.

The peace of God, which passes all understanding,
keep your hearts and minds in Christ Jesus. Amen.

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