

SERMON FOR FEBRUARY 24, 2013

The First Chinese Church of Christ in Hawai'i UCC

2nd Sunday in Lent & FCCC 'Ukulele 'Ohana

7:45 & 10:30 Worship Services

Scripture: Genesis 15:1-12, 17-18; Luke 13:31-35

Message: **"Lent 2: Holding to the Promise to Make Sense of the Present!"**

Kekapa P.K. Lee

JESUS DOESN'T SEEM TO BE TOO WORRIED ABOUT HEROD.

HEROD IS NOTHING.



WWW.AGNUSDAY.ORG

THE REAL THREAT LIES AMONG THE PEOPLE JESUS HAD COME TO SAVE.



SERIOUSLY, WHO WAS DOING HIS MARKET RESEARCH?



LUKE 13:31-35

© WETZSTEIN 13.02.20

MAN! THESE PHARISEES ARE JUST TRYING TO GIVE JESUS A LITTLE HELP AND HE GOES OFF ON A RANT!



WWW.AGNUSDAY.ORG

THEY'RE NOT TRYING TO HELP JESUS — BUT IT DOESN'T MATTER. JESUS GOES TO JERUSALEM FOR EVERYONE, EVEN PHARISEES WHO ARE TRYING TO HURT HIM.



YEAH — YOU'RE PROBABLY RIGHT. YOU KNOW WHAT THEY SAY... "KEEP YOUR FRIENDS CLOSE AND YOUR PHARISEES CLOSER."



LUKE 13:31-35

07.02.20

© WETZSTEIN

WHY IS JESUS TALKING ABOUT CHICKENS?

OH THAT'S COOL...

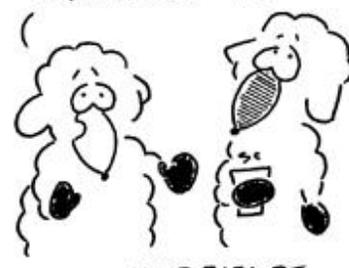


WWW.AGNUSDAY.ORG

SEE — JESUS IS DESCRIBING GOD'S HISTORIC ACTION. GOD HAS ALWAYS LONGED TO GATHER HIS PEOPLE. JESUS IS IDENTIFYING HIMSELF AS GOD!



WAIT! GOD IS A CHICKEN?!



LUKE 13:31-35

© WETZSTEIN 04.03

Gathering in the Word

Lent in the Church (all-the-people!) is a time for self-awareness and mindfulness (*‘actively attentive or deliberately keeping something in mind’*) as a prelude to repentance and transformation!

The Spiritual practices of Lent enable us to look at the whole of our lives,

- the heroes and villains,
- the compassionate and apathetic,
- the self-aware and ignorant.

In an interdependent universe—what we do makes a difference and, though we cannot lose God’s grace—we can limit and defer our experience of that grace by our conscious and unconscious behaviors—traditionally known as sins of **commission** (*those things we do*) and **omission** (*those things we don’t do*). None of us can throw the first stone; we are all implicated in the social and relational ills of the world. We all cause pain—often innocently and ironically—when we are trying to do or say the right thing!

Our focus scripture lesson from Luke 13:31-35 portrays and reveals Jesus in sharp contrast to the dominant order of that day—of Herod and Rome. Jesus heals and casts out demons in comparison to the dominant order of Herod—which is itself wounding and demonic. In Jesus’ grief and anguish over the dominant culture of the day in Jerusalem—**Jesus anticipates and portends and foreshadows a future that will be ordered in healthy and messianic ways!**

The theme of the day for this 2nd Sunday in Lent is **contradiction** and **alternative!**

Hearing the Word

Genesis 15:1, 2, 17-18 (*The Message Bible*)

15 After all these things, this word of GOD came to Abram in a vision: “Don’t be afraid, Abram. I’m your shield. Your reward will be grand!”²⁻³ Abram said, “GOD, Master, what use are your gifts as long as I’m childless and Eliezer of Damascus is going to inherit everything?” Abram continued, “See, you’ve given me no children, and now a mere house servant is going to get it all.”⁴ Then GOD’s Message came: “Don’t worry, he won’t be your heir; a son from your body will be your heir.”⁵ Then he took him outside and said, “Look at the sky. Count the stars. Can you do it? Count your descendants! You’re going to have a big family, Abram!”⁶ And he believed! Believed GOD!

⁷ GOD continued, “I’m the same GOD who brought you from Ur of the Chaldees and gave you this land to own.”⁸ Abram said, “Master GOD, how am I to know this, that it will all be mine?”⁹ GOD said, “Bring me a heifer, a goat, and a ram, each three years old, and a dove and a young pigeon.”¹⁰⁻¹² He brought all these animals to him, split them down the middle, and laid the halves opposite each other. But he didn’t split the birds. Vultures swooped down on the carcasses, but Abram scared them off. As the sun went down a deep sleep overcame Abram and then a sense of dread, dark and heavy.

¹³⁻¹⁶ GOD said to Abram, “Know this: your descendants will live as outsiders in a land not theirs; they’ll be enslaved and beaten down for 400 years. Then I’ll punish their slave masters; your offspring will march out of there loaded with plunder. But not you; you’ll have a long and full life and die a good and peaceful death. Not until the fourth generation will your descendants return here; sin is still a thriving business among the Amorites.”

¹⁷⁻¹⁸ When the sun was down and it was dark, a smoking firepot and a flaming torch moved between the split carcasses. That’s when GOD made a covenant with Abram: “I’m giving this land to your children, from the Nile River in Egypt to the River Euphrates in Assyria; . . .

In verse 6 (Genesis 15:6) “**Abram believed! Believed Yahweh GOD! So God declared Abram “Set-Right-with-God.”** Abram (who would later become Abraham) becomes “a new creation.” The old has passed away and, behold, the new has come—not

physically, not in terms of anything Abram could see, touch, or sense within his body; but in terms of his heart—**Abram had become altogether new sheerly because of the glorious touch of God’s Holy Spirit!** He and Sarai **will** have a son!

In verses 17-18 GOD makes a **covenant** (*agreement, contract, promise*) with Abram:

*“When the sun was down and it was dark, a smoking firepot and a flaming torch moved between the split carcasses. That’s when **GOD made a covenant with Abram**”* – which is the process of **cutting a covenant** with Abram and he was to be given a bunch of lands (that belonged to other people) to call home. There’ll be two more times in Genesis that his **covenant** will be repeated.

Luke 13:31-35 (NIV 2011)

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.’”

Luke was a “skilled literary stylist” in his Gospel and the Book of Acts. Luke knew how to put a story together and we see this again and again in his writings!

However—Chapter 13 is a little quirky and odd. Jesus seems to be “bobbing and weaving” a lot here.

- On one hand Luke seems to say that the Kingdom of God is wide open; that it’s on the move; and it’s huge as a giant mustard tree and as pervasive and all-encompassing as the presence of yeast in a ball of dough!
- We’ve got fig trees that get a second chance!
- We got people coming from all points of the compass to sit at God’s banquet table.
- Then again—we’ve got knocking and pleading and a curt rebuff and snub from the master of a house whose door just won’t open for certain folks!
- Then—we have the counter-intuitive even of some Pharisees *seemingly* trying to protect Jesus—which in turn elicits and brings out from Jesus some odd statements about today and tomorrow and the next day and gathering up chicks!

So what is the **theme** of Chapter 13?

- Maybe it’s that the Kingdom of God is mysterious but also wonderful?
- Maybe the theme here is that the Kingdom is everywhere to be seen, everywhere to be accessed such that if the day comes when you find it yourself and in a moment outside of God’s Kingdom . . .
- Maybe it was because you were all along too busy being obsessed with pesky and irritating rules that kept you from seeing ***real people as real people***, from seeing ***real miracles as miracles***, from ***rejoicing over the north, south, east and west*** ***people sitting at the table with you because you were too hung up on how strange and foreign they seemed to you!***

Doing the Word

So for this Second Sunday in Lent, what is the Word of God for us?

1. ONE: God will give the “fig tree’ of your life every second chance God can!

- God give us many chances!
- **“God makes a way where there is no way!”**
- Out of an apparent scarcity—abundance emerges!
- Where there seems to be a ‘dead end’ – a path and opening appears!
- When we “hit bottom” – we discover God is with us—and we can—with God’s companionship and inspiration—climb out of the mess in which we’ve found ourselves!
- When we think we are unlovable or will never find a loving friendship or partner—we have a synchronous meeting and **everything changes!**
- **We also have one another!**

2. TWO: With God—there’s no need for shame or unwarranted guilt!

- God’s affirmation of Jesus all applies to all of us.
- **Nothing can separate us from God’s love!**
- **Believe God and God’s WORD – not others!**
- **Everyone is welcome in God’s Kingdom—even, especially sinners!**

3. And all the while God’s Kingdom is growing up around you like a mighty tree and is spreading all around you like invisible yeast that is even now suddenly-all-at-once morphing and transforming the whole ball of wax into something that glorifies God! But if at the end of the day all you can do is wish for Jesus to move to another neighborhood . . . well, when the day comes when all the pounding your fist can handle on GOD’s front door does you no good—don’t pretend to be shocked!

THREE: The Kingdom of God is growing steady and sure—its branches reaching up to heaven by now, it’s

yeasty presence permeating and having wondrous effect throughout the very fabric of existence

- It's hard to think of the future God has in store for us . . . but there is a future much more glorious than this place!
- It is with God—that we'll see again all our loved ones—our grandparents, our parents, our sister and brothers, our sons and daughters; our aunties and uncles and many others including friends and people who have been close to us!
- May our Church—TFCCCH—be such a Church—the Body of Christ who welcomes all—a safe place where we meet and become God's 'ohana and family!

Sent in the Word

In our Lenten Season—this odd passage from Luke 13 reminds us both of the Kingdom's reality and our need to rejoice in that Kingdom no matter how many surprises it delivers!

Our world around is still filled with *foxes* and ***we chickens don't always think we have a chance—but sisters and brothers—thankfully we now know that the Mother Hen under whose wings we take shelter has some other names—like the Lion of Judah!***

* ~ *