

A Man and His Battles

Luke 13:31–35 (ESV)

INTRODUCTION: There was a time in our land when Dads ruled, it was called the 90's. Yes, Dads ruled from a large, cushy recliner sat opposite the television. His scepter of power was called the remote and he wielded it with unmitigated power. He watched what he wanted to watch. Yes, those were the good ole days.

And you can be certain, he would not be watching Bridget Jones Diary or Mama Mia, he wasn't going to snuggle up and watch Twilight or the Notebook. No, for him there had to be an Russian Boxer to knock out, Murderous Nazi Scientist to outwit, Roman Emperors to fight in the Arena, or unruly cowboys to shoot down at the OK corral.

Yes, those were the good old days, when testosterone ran high, and you only cry when... well you don't cry... you sometimes feel something, like when Rudy finally gets in the game or when or when Bruce Willis decides to set the nuke off on the asteroid. Ah yes, in those days Dad's ruled and there was peace in the land.

Guy movies and Girl movies are different. Girl movies are all about the relationship, he likes her, then he doesn't like her, then he likes her again, the end.

There are relationships in Guy movies, but they are all pointed at something - a dragon, for example, a Darth Vader, a Sauron. There has to be an evil villain to battle.

That is true of all great stories. Even the ultimate story - Think about it, in Eden there was a dragon, that ancient serpent Satan. But rather than slay the Dragon and save the princess... Adam tolerated him. The rest of history awaited the emergence of a second Adam, the Lord Jesus Christ, who would crush the serpent.

Paul reminds us in the closing of his letter to the Christians at Rome...

Romans 16:20 (ESV)

²⁰ The God of peace will soon crush Satan under your feet..

Notice the juxtaposition of peace and war. The God of PEACE will CRUSH Satan... and you will have a part in it; It will be under your feet, so you too will sink a heel in that ancient serpent who started all this.

This is a story that men can engage in. This is a King that men can serve.

The Jesus worshipped by so many in our modern age is nothing more than a figment of their imagination. As such, it is a form of idolatry. It is idolatry when one conceptualizes a vision of Christ and does not subject it to the authority of scripture.

The popular concept of the story of Jesus is something like an ancient flower child wandering around the Judean desserts preaching love and peace... and then they crucified him.

But even a casual reading of the Gospels shows something different—Matthew, Mark, Luke, and John portray Jesus as a troublemaker. He made trouble for the religious establishment and the political powers, and beyond that, it was said of his followers that they were turning the entire world upside down.

The fact that one may read the Gospels and not see that aspect of the person and work of Christ goes to show you just how powerful the paradigmatic blinders can be. We see what we intend to see rather than what is actually there.

Ultimately, we end up worshipping a false Christ who was always kind, always polite, and always winsome. We raise our children to be like **THAT** Jesus. We ask ourselves, “What would **THAT** Jesus do”? Above all **THAT** Jesus is NICE to everybody.

When we see someone who claims to be a Christian, we evaluate him on the NICENESS scale. If, God forbid, someone says that he is not NICE, well we must assume that he is not like Jesus, because **THAT** Jesus was always nice.

But the fact is, the REAL Jesus was not always not always polite (at least by our standards), he was not always gentle, not always winsome, and certainly not always nice.

ILLUSTRATION: The temple complex was a massive campus - the center piece was the actual temple. But it was surrounded by acre upon acre of real estate. The largest portion was the Gentile Court - it was a place where God-fearing Gentiles (your ancestors) could come and worship the God of Abraham, Isaac, and Jacob. Some 30 acres were apportioned for this purpose.

Gentiles did not participate in the sacrifices, but they could learn and worship. A few enterprising Jewish businessmen saw the opportunity to set up shop in the Gentile court and began to sell animals to be used by the Jews for sacrifice. The Gentiles no longer had a place in the house of God.

What did Jesus do? He took a cord of three strands and fashioned it into a weapon, a whip, and cleared all of the moneychangers out of that 30-acre complex. Flipping over tables and striking men with great fury. Oh, and remember, there were armed temple guards, the same ones who arrested Jesus in Gethsemane... they did not intervene.

If we worship the false Christ of culture, we hear that and immediately think, “How unchristlike.”

Well, a lot of things the REAL Jesus did seem to us as Un-Christlike. Not only did He physically drive people out of the temple, shouting, “My father’s house is to be a house of prayer, but you have turned into a den of thieves.

- **He was constantly offending people** - in fact, if you weren’t offended, you simply weren’t paying attention. Oh, and he never apologized for saying things that offended people.
- **At times, He called people names** - He called the Pharisees a bag of baby snakes. In today’s text, he calls Herod a fox. He even called Peter Satan. He called people blind guides, whitewashed tombs, and hypocrites.
- **He expressed frustration with people** - often saying, “How long must I be with you!” Or “Do you still not understand.” To Nicodemus, he said, “Are you a teacher in Israel, and you don’t get this?” Peter asked about his plans for John at the end of John’s Gospel, and Jesus said, “That’s none of your business”.

In fact, we assume that if the culture is outraged by us, we must have done something wrong - it is simply inaccurate. If we are to follow the REAL Jesus, we must assume that if the culture is not upset with us, there must be a problem.

Now - let me say, parenthetically, that some people actually are jerks. They look like they were baptized in pickle juice. They have the spiritual gift of criticism. I'm not talking about those guys. I wouldn't let them lead in silent prayer.

If you have achieved **TOP CONTRIBUTOR** status on a Rants, Raves, and Reviews Facebook group... you may be one of those people.

But the fact is, **2 Timothy 3:12 (ESV)**

12 Indeed, all who desire to live a godly life in Christ Jesus will be persecuted,

If you are never being persecuted to some degree, perhaps you've misunderstood godliness... or perhaps you aren't worshipping the Jesus of scripture.

CONTEXT: Today's text is a good case study. Remember, Jesus was preaching in the towns and villages of Judea and making his way toward Jerusalem. He is in the territory of Herod Antipas. This is one of the sons of Herod the Great, who tried to have Jesus killed at his birth.

Antipas was a bizarre character. In Luke 23, we read that he had wanted to meet Jesus for a long time. We read today that he was also desiring to have Jesus killed. He had the same twisted sort of perspective on John the Baptist. Antipas seemed to like John but also had him beheaded when his stepdaughter Salome danced for him. He was a, "double-minded man unstable in all of his ways".

We pick up in verse 31...

TEXT: Luke 13:31-35 (ESV)

31 At that very hour some Pharisees came and said to him, "Get away from here, for Herod wants to kill you."

The best commentators agree that these Pharisees were not being friendly toward Jesus but rather seeking to intimidate him. They had already called Him Beelzebub, "the Prince of Dung." Now, they try a new tactic... by the way, you may encounter these as well as you follow Jesus.

- **False Alliances** - At first glance, they seem to be trying to help Jesus. We are on your side; we don't want you to die. But earlier in the text, we read how the Pharisees had conspired to kill Jesus. Judas was not the only betrayal Jesus suffered.
- **Intimidation** - Notice they came as a group. That's how it typically happens. They come representing a larger un-named consensus. The elusive "they." "They" are saying, "They" are concerned. Who are "THEY," "oh, I'm not at liberty to say."

Sanballat came only when Tobiah agreed to go with him. Misery loves company, so do critics.

ILLUSTRATION: We went through a season in my last church where we were baptizing a lot of people, leading folks to Jesus. Another church in the area became very critical - they didn't

think we were doing it the “right way”. They on the other hand, weren’t reaching anybody with the Gospel. I said, “*I like how we ARE doing it better than how they AREN’T Doing it*”.

- **Ultimatums** - Leave or else.
- **Political Threats** - We will get the King involved.
- **Physical Violence** - Death threats are nothing new. In fact, if you have any sort of public profile and haven’t got one, check your spam folder. They are a dime a dozen.

How does Jesus respond?

1. He Proceeds Faithful to His Commission -

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.’”

Jesus calls Herod a fox. Foxes in scripture were little destructive nuisances. Remember, in Song of Solomon, we read, “It’s the little foxes that spoil the vines.”

They were the armadillos of Jesus’ day. What on earth are they here for? They just mess up your yard and carry diseases. The only thing they are good at is finding their way back to your house if you haul them off.

Well, that was Herod - he was a fox and a nuisance. Jesus thought very lowly of Herod. He is the only man in scripture to whom Jesus refused to speak. He answered Pilate; he answered the Chief Priest, but not Herod.

today and tomorrow, and the third day was a Jewish colloquialism, a figure of speech. In the South, when someone asks us when we are going to do something, we might say, “*I’m a fixin’ to*”, or my Dad would say, “*I’ll get to dreckly*”. What did that mean? Absolutely nothing; it meant he would do it when he got good and ready. That’s what Jesus is saying here.

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.’

Jesus had a mission. He had people to heal; he had sermons to preach, and he had demons to cast out. Nothing Herod or the Pharisees could say or do could change that.

You say, but wait, ultimately they stopped him by the cross... no friend, remember they had no power to take his life, he lay it down for us. They only did what they did because it was a part of his divine mission.

John 19:10–11 (ESV)

¹⁰ So Pilate said to him, “You will not speak to me? Do you not know that I have authority to release you and authority to crucify you?” ¹¹ Jesus answered him, “You would have no authority over me at all unless it had been given you from above. Therefore he who delivered me over to you has the greater sin.”

Not matter the threat, no matter the intimidation, hold the course. Stay faithful. When you are finished God will take you home, but never let someone bully you into silence.

He proceeds Faithful to his Commission...

2. He Proceeds with a Heart of Compassion -

³⁴O 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 were not willing!

We are told in another place that Jesus wept as He said these words.

THEY were rejecting HIM; HE was not rejecting THEM. There would be consequences to their rejection, so he wept... but his heart was always one of eager willingness to accept them, heal them, and forgive them if they would only come to Him.

We must remember, especially when we are being persecuted, that the people attacking us are not our ultimate enemy.

Ephesians 6:12 (ESV) ¹² For we do not wrestle against flesh and blood, but against the rulers, against the authorities, against the cosmic powers over this present darkness, against the spiritual forces of evil in the heavenly places.

They are under our enemy’s influence, but like Saul of Tarsus, there is always the chance that God may open their eyes.

That should be our prayer for them; that should be our heart toward them.

He proceeds Faithful to his Commission...He proceeds with a Heart of Compassion...

3. He Proceeds with a Future Confidence -

³⁵Behold, 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!’ ”

Even in the midst of popular rejection, Jesus looked by the eye of faith to a time when all of Israel would:

Zechariah 12:10 (ESV)

¹⁰ “... look on me, on him whom they have pierced, they shall mourn for him, as one mourns for an only child, and weep bitterly over him, as one weeps over a firstborn.

And then in the words of Isaiah, “a nation shall be born in a day”.

In the words of Paul, “The Natural branch will once again be grafted in.”

And all of Israel will be saved, when they say, “Blessed is he who comes in the name of the Lord”.

If you are going to fight as you ought, you have to have some grasp of how all of this is going to turn out.

Jesus is coming, we are the advance party, every knee shall bow before Him and every tongue shall confess Him Lord of all.

That reality enables one to fight from JOY... which is our greatest strength.

CONCLUSION/INVITATION:

ILLUSTRATION: Alexander Solen-itsyn was a Christian imprisoned by Russia for preaching his faith... One day, he leaned on his shovel and watched the gray clouds drag across the sky. All of his bones and muscles ached. Hunger gnawed at his stomach. Years of hard labor in the Siberian Gulag had ruined his health and stripped his hope. He could endure it no longer. He dropped his shovel, left the work gang and sat on a bench nearby. Soon he knew that a guard would tell him to go back to work. When he would refuse the guard would beat him to death. He thought, “A quick, bloody death today, would be better than a slow death in a bleak empty future.”

As he stared at the ground waiting for the guard, he heard footsteps and braced himself. But when he looked up it was an old prisoner standing before him. He said nothing, but knelt down in front of him and with a stick scratched the sign of the cross in the dirt. He then went back to work.

As he stared at the Cross drawn in the dirt, his entire perspective changed. He knew he was only one man against the all-powerful Soviet empire. Yet he knew there was something greater than the evil he saw in the prison camp, something greater than the Soviet Union. He knew that hope for all people was represented by that simple Cross. Through the power of the Cross, anything was possible. He slowly rose to his feet, picked up his shovel, and returned to work. Outwardly, nothing had changed. Inside, his mourning was turned to joy.

Maybe today you are tempted to surrender, to give up... look with me at the cross. Remember one who for the joy set before him... endured... the cross... despised the shame... and now is seated at the right hand of God Almighty.