

## The Mercy of a Final Warning

Luke 23:26-31

June 22, 2025

Let's open our Bibles to Luke 23. Luke 23, the record of our Lord's crucifixion. And today we are looking at verse 26 and following, where Jesus speaks to the weeping women. And as he speaks to the weeping women, and through the weeping women to the rest of the nation of Israel, he is conveying the mercy of God to a people who are under judgment. They're heading for disaster. This crucifixion of their Messiah does not come without consequences.

So Luke 23, find your way to verse 26, and let's read the verses following. "And when they led him away, they took hold of a man, Simon of Cyrene, coming in from the country, and placed on him the cross to carry behind Jesus. Following him was a large multitude of the people and of women who were mourning and lamenting him.

"But Jesus, turning to them, said, 'Daughters of Jerusalem, stop crying for me, but cry for yourselves and for your children. For behold, the days are coming when they will say, "Blessed are the barren, and the wombs that never bore, and the breasts that never nursed." Then they will begin to say to the mountains, "Fall on us" and to the hills "Cover us." For if they do these things when the tree is green, what will happen when it is dry?'" And we'll stop there, consider that section.

This account that we just read, and really the entire crucifixion narrative, is really full of bitter irony. In fact, the whole scene is ironic. It is the total reversal of what we should expect. Jesus, the innocent one, the King, the Messiah, crucified by his own people whom he came to serve as their king? Total irony.

So the whole scene is ironic, a reversal of our expectation. But also the constituent parts are ironic. There's irony all through this entire section. Considering what we read, the most sympathetic figure in the account, Jesus, he is the

dying man, the condemned man at the center of the action. But he redirects the sympathy away from himself and back on to the sympathizers. That's unexpected. Consider what he said about motherhood, the universal desire of motherhood, joys of pregnancy, nursing babies. There's a strange reversal in this beatitude, where Jesus pronounces blessedness on childless women. He says such barrenness is to be preferred over fertility. That's ironic.

Then, as the one who is facing the greatest peril, it would seem, imminent death by crucifixion, Jesus waves off any concern about his own peril, and he warns those who are standing by, who are watching in relative safety and security. I mean, after all this, they're going to go back to their homes. They're going to celebrate Passover with their families. They're going to eat a Passover meal, talk about the news of the day and the events. But their lives are going to move on. He's dying that day. And he warns those who watch in relative safety and security about their imminent danger. That, too, ironic.

And all of this is evidence of God's mercy, which is itself totally unexpected. It's the greatest of all ironies. These people are crucifying the Son of God. These people are killing the Messiah that he so graciously provided for them. Should they not be immediately destroyed on the spot for the depth of this rebellion? I mean, this is the coup of all coups. Crucify their king before he even takes office, starts to rule. This is unexpected mercy on God's part, on Christ's part. That's what we see, here. This account, and all through the crucifixion narrative, this is what we see repeatedly: the mercy and the kindness of God in the ministry of Jesus Christ.

And to the very end, here we see him in the ministry of his prophetic office. He came in as the Messiah, executing three offices: prophet, priest, and king. Here, he's in his prophetic office. We're going to see all three of those, by the way, in this account. But here it's the prophetic office. He came as prophet. He's delivering the mercy of God to the people, and it comes in the form of a warning, a warning to a condemned nation. And that really is what all prophetic ministry is, by the way, divine mercy, mercy to those who are under judgment. That is the entire history of the prophets in the nation of Israel. They

were sent to, by God, to warn the disobedient, call them back, to turn from their wicked ways and live. That is a mercy on God's part.

Israel doesn't have a good record of recognizing God's mercy. You may remember Stephen in Acts chapter 7. He said to the Sanhedrin, "'Which one of the prophets did your father's not persecute?'" Here they are. They're at it again, just up to their same old ways as with the prophets of old, the rejection of Jesus is somewhat predictable. In fact, he said this, if you look back at, and just flip a few pages back to Luke 11, Luke 11 in verse 49. Jesus told them, "'The wisdom of God said this: "I will send to them prophets and apostles, and some of them they will kill, and some they will persecute, so that the blood of all the prophets shed since the foundation of the world may be charged against this generation, from the blood of Abel to the blood of Zechariah, who was killed between the altar and the house of God." Yes, I tell you, it shall be charged against this generation.'"

They had a history of killing their prophets. They had a history of silencing the mercy and the warning of God. And so Jesus said, Luke 13:33, "'I must journey on. I must journey on today, tomorrow, the next day. For it cannot be that a prophet should perish outside of Jerusalem.'" Now that he's come to Jerusalem, Jesus knows he's going to die a prophet's death. That's what he came to do. He came to die. And notice, all through this account, he doesn't protest his innocence. He takes no thought for himself.

Instead, he's here to deliver one final warning, yet another act of God's kindness and his mercy. And that is the God that we know and love and worship. He's a God of all mercy, a God of great grace, a God with compassion and kindness for sinners, including these sinners, even at the point of their greatest, most heinous sin, the greatest injustice of all history of crucifying the Son of God.

The example that Jesus sets here in his dying hour is really an illustration in his own life of what he taught in the Sermon on the Mount. And really that clarifies an application

for us. Remember what he said in the Sermon on the Mount? "'Love your enemies. Do good to those who hate you.'" Remember that he said, "'Be merciful as your Father is merciful'"? Is that not what he's doing, here?

So two main points for today. If you're a note taker, you can just jot these down. I've got some sub-points underneath them. But two main points: God's providence prepares the warning, and God's prophet provides the warning. God's providence prepares the warning, and God's prophet provides the warning.

Number one: God's providence prepares the warning. Look again at those verses that we read, verses 26 through the first part of 28. "And when they led him away, they took hold of a man, Simon of Cyrene, coming in from the country, and placed on him the cross." That's the patibulum, it's the, it's the horizontal beam that he would be nailed to. And that beam would be erected, put up on a, on a stake that was in the ground. That's what he carried as the patibulum. When they led him away, they took hold of a man, Simon of Cyrene coming in from the

country, placed on him that patibulum, that cross beam to carry behind Jesus. "And following him was a large multitude of the people, and of women who were mourning and lamenting him. But Jesus, turning to them, said." And then he speaks.

Last time, we were introduced to Simon of Cyrene, and also the large crowd of onlookers, and also the mourning women. And we are going to get to know them a little bit better today. But the main connection that I want you to see is, at the end of verse 26, they placed on Simon the cross to carry behind Jesus. And then the beginning of verse 28, "Jesus, turning to them, spoke." Delivered the warning. Think about that for a minute. Without Simon carrying the cross for Jesus, Jesus is not turning and speaking to anyone. This encounter is so clearly arranged by the providence of God.

Think about it. If Simon had not wandered in from the country on this particular morning, Jesus wouldn't have been able to do anything but trudge up that hill bearing the burden of his own cross, stumbling upward toward his bitter end. That's all he could do. That's all he had strength for. It is only by

the providence of God that we have this account. Luke is actually the only Gospel writer to record this. But it's only by God's providence that Jesus is able to deliver this prophetic warning at all before he ascends the cross. This is very special stuff we're looking at, here, and a very clear evidence of the providence of God, and a reminder to us: God's providence rules over your lives as well.

Let me show you in this first point how God's providence made five preparations for Jesus. Five preparations, here's some sub-points. First, God's providence created the need for another to bear Jesus' cross to Calvary. God's providence created the need for another to bear the cross. The text begins in verse 26, "They led him away." And that links us back to the trials, reminds us of the trials before the Jews, before Pilate, which, as we've seen, involved a lot of physical abuse. It led to extreme exhaustion for Jesus.

We know from reading John 19:17 that when he left Pilate's Praetorium, Jesus started out carrying his own cross. So he started out that way, but due to severe physical depletion, he

couldn't carry on. Remember the trauma, the dehydration, blood loss, lack of rest, calorie deficiency. He is a diminished man, and he is struggling to carry his own cross. He's been awake for 24 hours. He's endured trials, physical abuse; he's been slapped, beaten by the temple guards of Caiaphas. He's been flogged by Pilate's soldiers to pacify the Jewish leadership.

As per John 19:1, those floggings ranged between the least severe, the *fustigadio*, and the more severe, the *flagelladio*. Whatever it was, whether it was kind of a whipping for a schoolboy or something a little bit harsher, he'd endured all this. Added to that, though, Pilate gave a final scourging in preparation for the cross, in preparation for crucifixion. According to Matthew 27:26, Mark 15:15, that is in Latin called the *verberatio*, which thoroughly weakened the victim, weakened Jesus' body significantly.

It was meant to take away his fight for life so that he didn't hang there too long on the cross, and all the crucifixion detail of all the soldiers who were attending there didn't have to be there too long, so you don't have to pay them time-and-a-

half or double-time or whatever it is for being there for too long. They wanted the, the beating, the final scourging was very severe, preparing the victim's body, taking away blood, and fight, and energy so that the victim would succumb quickly to his death.

One scholar, Josef Blinzler, good German name, he painted a very gruesome picture in his study on the scourging that Jesus endured just prior to the cross. Blinzler writes, "He was stripped, bound to a post or a pillar and beaten by a number of torturers until he grew tired, and his flesh hung in bleeding shreds. Scourges or or whips were used, the leather thongs of these being often fitted with a spike or with several pieces of bone or lead joined to form a chain. It is not surprising to hear the victims frequently collapsed and died under this procedure." End quote.

There are a lot of accounts of scourging. They could be quite gruesome. They're kind of really unfitting to describe in full detail in public. But understanding just a little bit of this kind of helps us to see the, the circumstances for what

they are. This is horrible, gruesome, and yet this too, under the wise direction of God's providence intended for this greater purpose, that he would not be able to bear his own cross, that there would have to be another to take it for him because there's more for us to hear from him.

Very important for us to remember, beloved, as we reflect on all that our Lord suffered, whenever we go through our own persecutions, which by comparison seem like nothing. Whenever we go through our physical pains, relational sorrows, maybe even the mundane, everyday inconveniences and interruptions of life which we sometimes react worse to than the more severe things in our lives, above all of that, above every detail in our lives, there is the superintending wisdom of God's will. It's for our good and his glory, and we need to remember that all the time, that we are under the wise providence of God, just as our Lord was. The God who was superintended and oversaw this, the same God that we know today, the same God that we worship now, the same God who loves us and cares for every detail.

A second preparation of God's providence: God's providence provides a picture of Christian discipleship. God's providence provides us with a picture of Christian discipleship. Says they took hold of a man, Simon of Cyrene, placed on him the cross to carry. Where? Beside Jesus, in front of Jesus, leading? No, behind Jesus. Just prior to leaving on his final journey to Jerusalem so that he could accomplish our redemption on the cross, Jesus said in Luke 9:23, "'If anyone wishes to come after me, let him deny himself, take up his cross daily and follow me.'" A picture of discipleship is not the main point of the passage, but still, as if to illustrate the nature of discipleship as cross-bearing, God put Simon in the path of this procession, and he literally takes up the cross, literally bears the cross, and literally follows Jesus. Funny coincidence that.

Thirdly, God's providence provided this cross-bearer for Jesus and not another. God's providence provided this cross-bearer and not another. Verse 26, "When they led him away, they took hold of a man, Simon of Cyrene, coming in from the country." Not just any man, lots of men to choose from, this man.

He's known as Simon of Cyrene. Cyrene is a city in North Africa, located west of Egypt on the Mediterranean coast in really what's now the Benghazi region of Libya. It's pronounced *Kyrenaios* in the Greek, and we call it Cyrene. Some people call it Sarini. Whatever your preferred pronunciation is, we're not going to quibble, but Cyrene started out in the 7th century BC as a Greek colony, and then it became really the capital city of that whole region.

The administration of this region changed hands over the century. There were the original Greeks back in the 7th century, and that gave way to the the influence of the Egyptians over that, just the Egyptians who were to the east. They kind of ruled over the west. But then the Persians, when they came conquering, then it went back to the Greeks under Alexander the Great, and under Alexander the Great, as he conquered everywhere, this is really what created the opportunity for the Jews to enter into this part of the world in the Benghazi region, Cyrene. They arrived, and after their own exile in the late 4th century BC. Finally, Cyrene came under Roman rule, and there were four other major cities in that region called

Pentapolis, five cities, literally, and it was reorganized as a Roman senatorial province and renamed Serenica.

Caesar Augustus, when he came to power, granted the Jews of Serenica special privileges, and it meant that for them, Cyrene really did have a large, thoroughly thriving, flourishing Jewish population. And even though the province had its own Roman governor, Flavius, the Jews were granted the privilege of having their own Jewish ruler, someone who knew Jewish ways, a Jew who could rule over them. So it was very similar to the situation in Judea, with Herod and the Herods ruling over the Jews under the Roman governor.

Same thing here in Cyrene. In fact, Cyrene and Jerusalem, probably for many reasons, had very close ties, and so the Jews of each area could travel freely back and forth between those cities, Cyrenian and Alexandrian Jews. In fact, they were so frequently in Jerusalem as, as visitors, as temporary residents, and even more long-term or even permanent residents, according to Acts 6:9, they had their own synagogue, synagogue for the North Africans.

So when Luke tells us that Simon was “coming in from the country,” he doesn't mean that Simon had just at that moment arrived from Cyrene at this exact moment. Simon had been there already. Either he's there as a temporary resident, perhaps as a permanent resident. It's not entirely clear, but it's really most likely that he was there as a Cyrenian citizen. But he resided in Jerusalem temporarily to celebrate the two major feasts, Passover and Unleavened Bread, which is, they're on the cusp of right here. And then fifty days later will be the feast of Pentecost. After celebrating those two feasts, Simon and his family would return to their home in Cyrene.

This man just happens to be coming in from the country. Isn't that interesting? Maybe he's out for a morning walk. Maybe he's out there to spend some time in prayer, getting, preparing his heart for Passover. Maybe he just had breakfast with a friend, coffee. Who knows? Point is, Simon comes back from the country, he's really unaware of this procession. He hasn't been at the Praetorium. He's not fully informed. He's ignorant. He's unaware, and he just happens to walk into this, his normal path back to where he's residing, maybe his Airbnb or Vrbo or

whatever it is. He runs into this crowd coming at him. He pulls to the side, and then he's roped into this special detail by the Roman soldiers. He's pressed into this service against his will. It's not what he had on his planner.

Luke says, "They laid hold of Simon." Matthew and Mark use a more technical word, the verb *angareuo*, which means literally, to press into service. So Jesus alluded to this custom of pressing people into service in Matthew 5:41, "'Whoever shall force you to go one mile, go with him two miles.'" Don't resist the one who will press you into service, Jesus said. Soldiers had authority to press the populace into their service, to compel them to do tasks that would either help them out or unseemly tasks that they didn't want to do, such as this one: carry the cross of a condemned criminal. No Roman soldier would stoop to such an indignity, but for a conquered people, that's just the perfect thing for those under Roman rule to remind them who's in charge.

And again, we see here the providence of God at work in another detail. These soldiers chose this man out of the crowd

and not another man. Why is that? Because this man, Simon, a Cyrenian, he stood out to them as a foreigner. Maybe it was his dress, maybe it was his mannerisms. They were used to seeing who belonged and who did not. So the soldiers see an opportunity, here, to sequester an outsider for their purposes, not a Jewish resident of Jerusalem or Judea. And having the choice between the people that they're over all the time and maybe a foreigner, why not keep peace with the Judean Jews, make their job easier, avoid insulting them. Make the foreigner do it.

Again, reflect on that providence. Think about how God specially superintended this situation. It's a terrible inconvenience for Simon, and not a little insulting, to be forced to carry the cross for Jesus, for this condemned criminal. Providentially, he's there at just the precise moment to carry the cross. No doubt after taking the first few steps, you know what he's thinking? Man! Just a few minutes later I would have avoided this convenient, inconvenience, here. I could have been back at the Vrbo, preparing the Paschal lamb for Passover, getting ready to spend time with the family.

Simon had no idea, at least at this initial point, no idea he was following the Lamb of God who takes away the sin of the world. No idea that he is carrying the very implement that would slay God's Lamb for sacrifice, fulfilling the very Passover that he came to celebrate. Simon couldn't have known the point of this most unwelcome interruption, forced to bear the indignity of carrying a dead man's cross. He couldn't know all the profound meaning in that. How could he? But he would come to know. He'd know soon enough.

All three synoptic writers name Simon of Cyrene, so he's a man who is well-known to the early Christian community. He's honored by all of, all the Gospel writers. Simon of Cyrene, this outsider, this man who followed Jesus, carrying the cross, followed him outside of the city, or recorded in the language of Hebrews 13:11-13, "He went with Jesus outside the camp, bearing the shame of crucifixion with the Lord." When Simon, hearing all that transpired that day at Calvary, when he saw all that had happened, when he heard all of Jesus' words.

No wonder he came later in Pentecost with all those other African visitors. According to Acts 2:10, they came from the districts of Libya around Cyrene, and they came there to hear the Apostle's preaching at Pentecost and Simon believed. He believed. The Spirit came upon him. Simon of Cyrene came to faith in Christ. He raised his whole family in the faith. In fact, Simon's wife became a Christian. At least two of his sons became a Christian. How do we know that? Because his whole family became known to the Christians in Rome. Mark identifies Simon for the Roman readers of his Gospel. He is the father of Alexander and Rufus. Those are men known to the Roman Christians.

Paul, too, when he greeted his friends at the end of Romans in Romans 16:13, said, "Greet Rufus, a choice man in the Lord, also his mother and mine." Mark knew Simon and Alexander and Rufus. Paul knew Rufus, Simon's son. He knew Rufus' mother, too, the wife of Simon. These people are known. And when Paul writes in Romans 16 and Mark writes in his Gospel, by this time it's very likely that Simon had passed away. His family remained. His wife was there, his believing sons.

We don't know exactly how. We don't have the details. But from the cross to Pentecost to his landing in one of the churches in Rome, even though Simon had since passed away by the time Mark wrote his Gospel, by the time Paul wrote his epistle to the Romans, his wife and sons are faithful believers. They're known. They're greeted. It all started here at the cross with this providential encounter with a condemned man, the Lord Jesus Christ. Hears his words, he witnesses who he is, what he's like. He sees his character, even sees him pray for forgiveness as he hung between two thieves, and dying.

Simon became a very important witness to a very important event, one that Jesus' closest disciples were not even there to witness. No doubt all the Gospel writers were, key, keen to interview Simon of Cyrene to get the story, to get the facts down as they were writing their Gospels, verify the facts, facts that are recorded for us, here, by Luke. God's providence created the need for the cross to be borne by someone else. God's providence painted a picture of Christian discipleship. God's providence chose the right cross-bearer for Jesus.

I'll give you just two more of these. Number four: God's providence provided a large audience to receive the warning. God brought the audience to hear what Jesus had to say. Verse 27, "Following him was a large multitude of the people." We said this last time, but Luke portrays the onlookers as, they're kind of nondescript. They're idle, they're passive, but they are the evangelistic targets of this account. Luke sees the onlookers as different than the passersby who joined the leaders and soldiers and criminals in taunting Jesus. Many in this crowd, yeah, they sin. They are sinning in their ignorance, but they're not sinning against full knowledge of the truth.

Luke wants his readers to see, and these readers, by the way, including us, they're in the position of these onlookers, not really knowing exactly who this Jesus is, exactly what this death means, exactly the significance of the cross. And so for all those who don't have full knowledge, God extends mercy to the ignorant. He forgives the sins that are committed in ignorance. "Father, forgive them for they don't know what they're doing."

Luke was well-acquainted with someone in that same position, a good friend to someone who had in his former life committed terrible sins in his ignorance. Remember the Apostle Paul himself? He testified in 1 Timothy 1:13. He said, "I was shown mercy because I acted ignorantly in unbelief. I didn't have full knowledge. I didn't understand the meaning of what I was doing, the significance of it." Remember, he'd been, in that same text, a blasphemer, a persecutor, a violent aggressor against the faith, against Christianity, against Christ himself. But he was sinning in ignorance. He was zealous for the traditions of his fathers. In his zeal he persecuted the church. He didn't know that he was opposing God's chosen Messiah, the Son of God. He didn't know he was doing that.

So when God opened his eyes on the Damascus Road, giving Paul full knowledge of the truth to see and hear from the risen Lord Jesus Christ, "Saul, Saul, why do you persecute," not those people, "why do you persecute me?", you know what he did with the truth? He repented and believed. He left that entire party that followed that risen Lord.

That kind of characterizes these onlookers as well, many of them, anyway. Some of them had come from the Praetorium. Some of them had cried out for Jesus' blood. But many of them, they're just along for the spectacle. They're just curious onlookers, not really knowing what's going on, but kind of in the flow of the crowd. They're like everybody else. You're going to say what the rest of the crowd says, give in to groupthink and groupspeak. They hadn't actively opposed Jesus. Many of them, they rejected him out of ignorance. They went along with their religious leaders. They didn't search the Scriptures for themselves. They counted those guys as the studied men, listened to them. And here in the kind providence of God, they're about to receive mercy in the form of a prophetic warning.

Lastly, fifth, God's providence provoked his prophet Jesus to deliver this warning. In verse 27 read, "Following him was a large crowd of people and of women who were mourning and lamenting him." This is a provocation for Jesus. This is a provocation for him to answer this mourning, to answer, to prophetically speak. It's specially designed and directed by God to provoke the heart of his chosen prophet Jesus, to answer that, to speak to it, to correct their ignorance.

The women, here, are a subset of the larger multitude of the people. So we just described the crowd as nondescript, idle, passive. Not quite true of these women, is it? Luke describes them by the activity that they engage in. They are mourning. They are lamenting him, but they, too, like the crowd and like the larger crowd that they represent, they're ignorant about what they're mourning over. They don't get it. And I think that's the provocation for Jesus. I think that's what evoked his response, what prompted his words of warning. He knows that their sympathy is ignorant and uninformed. They really have no idea what they're weeping over, the real significance of what's happening all around them.

Some commentators believe that these women are here as hired mourners, paid to put on a loud show of sympathy, which kind of means that the mourning would be, in that view, somewhat forced or even false. They're just hired. They're doing their job. Others see these women as having, you know, a deeper religious motive in their lament, that they mourn, it really was a meritorious thing in Jewish religion to mourn for the condemned. It was a kind of an act of dying mercy for them. And

it did accrue to merit for them to gain or maintain favor with God that they would mourn for the dying. There's probably some truth in the motivations about these women in both views, maybe a mix of motives among the female mourners in a very large crowd of onlookers.

I think, though, that we can take maybe perhaps a, a less cynical point of view, namely that these women, they really are gripped by what they're witnessing. I mean, who wouldn't be? So their emotions are activated, but activated sincerely. I mean, it's hurting their hearts to see this man suffering as he's suffering. What we heard earlier about scourging, what Jesus received in addition to everything else he had to endure the previous night, it's horrible, unimaginable suffering. He seemed to strike such a tragic, pathetic figure on the streets of Jerusalem, passing through the streets of the city on his way to the hill of Golgotha.

How could these women not be affected? How could anybody look and not have their emotions stirred and be somewhat devastated at the sight? As we're soon going to see when Jesus

delivers his warning, the emotion of these women was misguided at best. It was driven by sentiment. It was an ignorant, uninformed emotion, an emotion that didn't come from the truth, through the mind and down to the, the affections. It was one that was just struck and prompted by what they saw. Still, God used their sympathy in his good providence to provoke his Messiah to speak.

As Jesus hears all this weeping and carrying on about him, he cannot help but speak with the voice of a prophet. And when he speaks, he conveys not harsh rebuke; he conveys love and mercy and compassion of God. So verse 28, "Jesus turning to them, he said," and with that we come to our second main point, number two, God's prophet provides the warning. God's providence has prepared the warning. And now Jesus, he's about to bring it. As God's prophet, he speaks to them, here, in love. He addresses them from a deep well of mercy in his soul, and he delivers to them in that mercy a very serious warning.

As we pointed out earlier, he's freed up now from carrying the horizontal beam of his own cross, and now he can turn and

Speak directly to the women. Let's read it again. "Jesus, turning to them," verse 28, "said, 'Daughters of Jerusalem, stop crying for me, but cry for yourselves and for your children. For behold, the days are coming when they will say, "Blessed are the barren and the wombs that never bore and the breasts that never nursed." And then they will begin to say to the mountains, "Fall on us" and to the hills, "Cover us." If they do these things when the tree is green, what will happen when it is dry?'"

Jesus is doing two things, here. Number one, he's correcting their emotion, and number two, he's directing their emotion. The problem isn't the emotion. The problem is it's not accurate, not according to truth. Let's correct that, redirect it, realign it, get it on the right track. First of all, Jesus corrects their emotion in verse 28. "'Daughters of Jerusalem,'" he says, "'stop crying for me, stop weeping for me. Cry for yourselves, weep for yourselves and for your children.'"

He is not harsh with them, here. He's not stern, but you could say he's mildly rebuking, he's mildly correcting them. He's redirecting their emotion, but you have to just, do not

miss the tenderness that's here. He speaks as a, not only as a king to his subjects; he speaks tenderly as a father to these daughters of Jerusalem, calls them "daughters."

He spoke the same way in Luke 13:34. The address to these women is really a call back to that text. Luke 13:34 says, "'O Jerusalem, Jerusalem, the city that kills the prophets and stones those sent to her. How often I wanted to gather,'" not you, "'how often I wanted to gather your children together, just as a hen gathers her brood under her wings, and you would not have it.'" His address, there, to Jerusalem is an example of metonymy. It's a rhetorical device in which the city stands for its leaders. The children of the city, they stand for the citizens of the city, its residents. In our text, they're called "daughters of Jerusalem."

So when Jesus addressed Jerusalem as "a city that kills the prophets," he's not talking to the baker, he's not talking to the tinker, he's not talking to the street-sweeper, he's not talking to the, he's talking to the political, religious leadership. They are charged to care for the people. They are

there to serve as faithful shepherds, but instead he comes and finds them to be nothing but thugs and hirelings and wolves abusing the sheep. Seeing how the false leaders mislead, abuse the people under their charge, Jesus wanted to gather those people, the city, her children, the daughters to himself, just as a mother gathers her brood under her wings to protect them from outside danger. So the daughters of Jerusalem are the children of Jerusalem and the brood that he longs to protect from harm.

This puts these women, in our text, puts them into a representative role in the scene before us. Jesus speaks to the women. He's provoked by their mourning and their lamenting, so he speaks to them, but he also speaks through them to all the people who surround them. He uses this address to the women not just to warn the women, but to warn them all. In fact, down in verse 48, the mourning that characterizes the women, in the end it proves to be contagious. All the crowds who came together for the spectacle, "when they observed what had happened, they were returning and they were beating their chests." What is that but a sign of abject sorrow? They're lamenting, their mourning. It

caught, it was real. It spread to those idle spectators and onlookers.

The emotion of the women, Luke 23, verse 27, verse 28, I have no reason but to believe that this is anything but genuine, sincere expression of mourning and lament. Jesus makes clear, here, their emotion is misguided. Their emotion is based on sentiment. It's reacting to what their their eyes are seeing. It's hitting their feelings, and they react as you, it's understandable, but they're failing to discern the truth of the matter. They're failing to understand why Jesus is dying. They're failing to interpret this scene. They see facts before them, but there's no interpretation of the facts to tell them what these facts mean. So they're misled. They don't know what his death means for themselves, for their children, and for their city.

So what may seem at first glance as sympathetic and virtuous, in the final analysis, when their emotion is not grounded in the truth, when their emotion is not bridled by the truth, it's actually vain and empty and even tragic. As I said,

though, Jesus is not rebuking them, here. Neither is he commending their sympathy. He's just showing that their emotion is preventing them, here, from seeing the real danger. The more misdirected they are, the heavier his heart is because they are no closer to escaping the true danger, the grave danger that they themselves face.

Jesus can see the future even on the road to the cross, the dreadful siege of Jerusalem that he's spoken of several times in Luke's Gospel. He can see as these tender women, some of them anyway, as they will, forgive the expression, but they literally will cook and eat their own offspring, their babies. This is why, in an attempt to correct misguided emotion, Jesus speaks to the women. He corrects their emotion, but he appeals to them by their emotions. He appeals to a mother's heart. He appeals to her nurturing instincts to love and to care for her own children.

And so he addresses the women, here, but through them to the rest, the women being more emotionally intuitive than men, more nurturing than men, ready to be affected, to allow emotion

to be directed to the right cause. Women aren't ashamed of their emotion, and so he grabs ahold of it; he redirects it for his own purposes. And what he says to these women, he says to everyone. And so having corrected their emotion, second, Jesus directs their emotion. He tells them what to be emotional about, what to mourn over, what to lament over, by warning them about the, the coming peril, about an imminent threat to them and their children.

Jesus is going through the emotion to target the mind. He instructs the mind. He also instructs their emotions, but he's attempting to direct these women to focus their attention and their emotion, looking at the real threat. "Turning to them, Jesus said, 'Daughters of Jerusalem, stop weeping for me. Weep for yourselves and for your children, for behold, the days are coming.'" And he's got a lot to say about those days.

Several points of concern about the days that are coming strengthen the warning. We see the severity of coming peril in verse 29, the gravity of coming peril in verse 30, and the certainty of the coming peril in verse 31. So you just want to

jot those words down: severity, gravity, and certainty. That'll help in your note-taking if you take notes.

He starts in verse 29 by warning them about the severity of the coming peril. “The days are coming when they will say, “Blessed are the barren and the wombs that never bore and the breasts that never nursed.”” Again, as I mentioned in the beginning, in a bitter irony here, really, what is a shock to their emotions, Jesus gives them a beatitude that reverses the desire for motherhood, the life-giving joys of pregnancy, the nurturing joys of nursing babies. Because of what's coming, motherhood is going to be such a liability that barrenness is better than babies.

Who would ever imagine something like that? For any mom, it's beyond the pale, it's unimaginable, and we're not going to rehearse it now, but you can go back and read for yourselves. You can listen to the sermons online that we covered on, on these texts, but Luke 13:31-35, Luke 19:41-44, Luke 21:20-24. All of those are describing what he's talking about: the coming destruction on Jerusalem. And it's horrific, legendary

suffering, terrible times, and without mercy on the most vulnerable victims of the horrors that are coming upon Jerusalem, to the mothers and to their children. It's just awful. And in those coming days of judgment, childless women will not be lamented or commiserated. They'll be envied. In fact, that's the meaning of the word *makarios*, blessed. It's, it's to have something that everybody else envies. Imagine that: envied for being childless.

Next Jesus warns of the gravity of the coming peril, verse 30. "'And then they'll begin to say to the mountains, 'Fall on us,' to the hills, 'Cover us.''" I mean, that's a heavy, heavy, I mean literally, heavy, mountains, hills, heavy. What kind of dreadful judgment is coming that people would say such things? "Crush me with a mountain. Cover me with a hill." In fact, the terms, there, are plural. It's total overkill. It's not just a mountain and a hill. It's calling for a pulverization by a mountain range, by the foothills themselves. That would be a better fate than living through this coming judgment.

The severity of the peril, the gravity of the situation, it really does call these women to stop and think, to consider the reason for this judgment. Why would he say that? This is harsh stuff, the most extreme situation, the gravest peril. What could drive people to such despair and hopelessness? Answer: terrible sin against God, rejecting his chosen Messiah. That might do it. Asking that a murderer would be released instead of the King who's innocent. That'll do it.

The severity of the peril points to the gravity of the judgment. It points to the gravity of sins against God. Here, Jesus is, you can probably see in your text that it's all caps or maybe italicized, demonstrating that that's coming from the Old Testament, it's a reference back to the Old Testament. In this case Jesus is quoting from Hosea 10 verse 8, which describes a pre-exilic, pre-exile, prior to the exile of the Assyrians against Israel, a judgment against Israel. Remember by that time God had sent to Israel the northern tribes, prophet after prophet after prophet. He was sending the prophets again as a mercy, to lift them out of the sins of their ignorance, to give them knowledge of the truth.

But what do they do? Prophet after prophet after prophet, what do they do? They turn their backs, they stiffen their necks, they harden their hearts. They sinned against the knowledge that they received, disregarded it. Jot it down. You should read the whole chapter of Hosea 10, confronts Israel's sins, promises retributions. And that promise in Hosea 10 was first fulfilled in the events of the exile, when the Assyrian army came in and destroyed Samaria, carted off the people of the northern tribes of Israel into exile. The gravity of their sins really demanded, justice demanded the gravity of this judgment, this terrible punishment.

So when Jesus quotes Hosea 10:8, he's telling these daughters of Jerusalem, he's speaking through them to the crowds, Look, you've learned nothing from your history. You've learned nothing from your past judgment. Israel's committing the same sins, driven by the same greed, driven by the same idolatry. There's no fear of God before your eyes. There's no concern to heed his warnings. Don't let this happen again. Oh, but it will. It's going to happen again, and Hebrews 10:8 will apply to them yet again in the destruction of Jerusalem in AD 70. And in fact, there's another reference to Hebrews 10:8 in

Revelation chapter 6. I believe it's verse 16, happening just before the coming of the Son of Man.

Added to the severity and the gravity of the peril, finally, Jesus speaks of the certainty of the coming peril in verse 31. “‘If they do these things when the tree is green, what will happen when it is dry?’” Actually, it's not tree, there, but it's the word wood. The CSB, the ESV, they have a better translation for this. “‘But if they do these things when the wood is green.’” Any of you campers, fishermen, hunters, ever try to burn green wood? What does it do? Fills your camp with smoke, and you're like, Get rid of the green wood; find the dry.

“‘But if they do these things when the wood is green, what's going to happen when it's dry?’” What's the meaning of the green and the dry wood? What do those figures point to? A lot of different views, here, and lots of trees have been cut down, paper milled, and ink spilled to give different opinions on this. I think if we just boil it down, very simply Jesus is here referring to himself as the time or the condition of the green wood, moist, hard to burn and when it does burn, it

actually creates quite a cloud of smoke and makes it noxious and causes more trouble. And then he refers to a Christ-less nation, unrepentant, Christ-rejecting Israel as the dry wood condition, like kindling for a fire.

Maybe you can keep your finger in Luke 23 and go back to Isaiah chapter 11. In Isaiah 11 verse 1, we see this figure of green wood, young wood, applying to Jesus himself. Isaiah 11:1, just a few verses here, "Then a shoot will spring from the stem of Jesse, and a branch from his roots will bear fruit." What's going to happen in that green wood time? "The Spirit of Yahweh will rest upon him, the spirit of wisdom and understanding, the spirit of counsel and might, the spirit of knowledge and the fear of Yahweh. And he will delight in the fear of Yahweh. He will not judge by what his eyes see, nor render a decision by what his ears hear. But with righteousness he will judge the poor. He'll decide with uprightness for the afflicted of the earth."

Stop there, because if you keep reading you'll see events that have not yet happened. "He'll strike the earth with the rod

of his mouth." Stop mid-sentence and know that Jesus is that stem of Jesse, a shoot from the stem of Jesse. He is the branch from the roots of Jesse. He is bearing fruit, bearing fruit even now. We are evidence of that fruit. So the green wood is a time of moist vitality. Remember what Jesus said in John 15, "'I am the vine, the true one.'" He speaks about the fruitfulness of branches that remain in him, that remain in a vital, nourishing relation with him, the true vine. He is Israel's true vine.

If you keep reading in Isaiah 11, we won't do that now for the sake of time, but if you keep reading, it describes a condition on earth of the millennial kingdom prior to the eternal state, a season of luxuriant fruitfulness, peace, prosperity, security, holiness, the knowledge of God, all happening right on earth, ruled by Jesus, the son of David.

All of that, all that promise, was short-cutted, stopped, short-circuited when Israel rejected her Messiah. Everything that could have happened did not happen, has been postponed to a later time because the nation cut themselves off from the supply, did not remain attached to the green wood, the stem and

the stump and the root of Jesse. The nation's cut off from the supply of nutrients, cut off from the life-giving sap that comes from the vine, cut off from all vitality. And not only will there be no fruit for this nation, they will become dry, useless branches. As Jesus says in John 15, they're good for nothing but kindling, for fuel, for the fire.

So, what happens next? Did the daughters of Jerusalem hear what Jesus is saying to them? Did the crowds of onlookers, do they hear him? Will they heed his warning? We've got a few chapters to go through, and we have to get into the second volume of Luke, the Book of Acts, to see what happens on the day of Pentecost. Because some of these people, they do hear, they do believe. Some of these onlookers are converted. Some of these women are converted, and they're able to escape the coming judgment. What about you, my non-Christian friend? What about you? History tells us that all of Jesus' words, his prophetic words, came true. This judgment actually happened.

Most of the Jews did not heed his warning, did not benefit from his mercy, did not enter into his love, and most of them

died horrible, painful, tragic deaths in AD 70, in the Roman desolation and destruction of Jerusalem. Jesus was right about that. In fact, he's right about everything. All his words were validated when he rose from the dead. If he fulfilled what he said he would do in rising from the dead after physically, literally, bodily put to death and buried in a tomb, laid there for three days, and then he rose again, if he was right about that, the biggest miracle, he's right about everything.

The death he died, my non-Christian friend, he died for you, too, if you'll believe, if you'll trust him. For you Christians, let me give you two brief points for your application, just very quickly. First, learn here from the recorded experience of Simon of Cyrene about God's providence. Don't resist his providence. Don't grumble against it. Don't resent his providential interruptions into this life.

Don't complain about how he orders your days and hours and minutes. All of us like to get things done, have a task list. We have a to-do list. We like to knock things out. God sometimes likes to interrupt that. You're not God, he is. He knows how

your day should go, so trust him. Live in constant gratitude. Recognize "God causes all things to work together for the good of those who love God and those who are called according to his purpose." Like Simon, you will learn to follow Christ more fully, nearly, and faithfully, be a true cross-bearing follower of Christ.

One more application, the second: Look at the mercy of God. Look at the mercy of your Savior even as he's dying on the cross, speaking words of mercy to his persecutors, his tormentors, his crucifiers. He's unjustly condemned. I mean, if there's anything that's more contrary to justice, and sometimes that's, that's the thing that burns us the most, when we're mistreated and maligned and hard done by, when it's not our fault at all. In fact, we were doing the exact opposite, a good thing. Someone treats us with disdain and scorn. What are we to do? Look to him. He spoke mercy to his enemies. He loved them. He asked God to forgive their sins of ignorance. "'Father, forgive them, they, because they do not know what they're doing.'"

We're to be kind. I'm reminded of what Paul told Titus, and maybe this will be a closing text, but just, we're to show gentleness to all people, remembering that we, too, sin sins of ignorance. And let's be honest; we've sinned sins of knowledge, against knowledge and God has been so kind to forgive. Titus 2:3: "For we ourselves also once were foolish, disobedient, deceived, enslaved to various lusts and pleasure, spending our live, life in malice and envy, despicable, hating one another.

"But when the kindness and affection of God our Savior appeared, he saved us not by works which we did in righteousness, but according to his mercy, through the washing of regeneration and renewing by the Holy Spirit, whom he poured out on us richly through Jesus Christ our Savior, so that having been justified by His grace, we would become heirs according to the hope of eternal life." Would you bow with me, please?

Our Father, we never want to sin against the truth, against knowledge, against what we know. And we find now as Christians who have been enlightened, who have tasted the Holy Spirit, have received the good Word, who have received regeneration itself by

the Holy Spirit, we've been born again to a living hope by the resurrection of Jesus Christ from the dead. Our sins are forgiven, our debt is paid, we are reconciled to you, Father.

And so we as Christians, when we sin now, we sin against that grace and against that knowledge. Our sins now are far greater than anything that we committed in our unbelief, in our ignorance, in our deception, in the darkness in our, of our hearts. And still you show a greater grace. Still you show love and mercy and kindness to us. If that's true of us, we continue to receive your kindness and mercy, will you help us, please, to set aside petty offenses, that we would not be caught up in complaining or grumbling against your providence?

Would you help us to overlook faults, even serious injustices, persecutions? Will you help us to follow our Lord and Savior Jesus Christ to the cross itself, where he prayed, "Father, forgive them, for they don't know what they're doing." Help us to be so minded, to please you in all things, and to continue to bathe in your favor, knowing that we are highly privileged, set apart by your electing love. Let us give

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ourselves wholly to you, to worship you in Christ's name and to spread the Word of his good Gospel to every soul. In Jesus' name we pray. Amen.