

extrasensory dimension. Her fascination is not in her age. She is a dwelling place, not a collection of monuments, shrines... Jerusalem is more than a place in space or a memorial of glories of the past. Jerusalem is a prelude, anticipation of days to come.

Abraham Joshua Heschel, 1907–1972

Related topics

For further study:

Promised land; Suffering Messiah; Prophecy

Closing Prayer

In darkness and mystery, O God,
you called Abraham to trust your promise
and you gave him the faith to follow that call.
Bless our keeping of Lent,
so that by your grace we may fulfil
our baptismal calling to serve you
by prayer, self-denial and the works of love,
trusting that Christ will transform our lowly body
in the glory of the eternal Easter;
for he is one with you and the Holy Spirit,
now and for ever.

Collect for Lent 2, Year C³

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³ *Celebrating the Christian Year : Prayers and Resources for Sundays, Holy Days and Festivals : Years A, B and C / compiled by Alan Griffiths. – 3 vols. – Norwich : Canterbury Press, 2004-5.*

The Second Sunday of Lent

Principal Service readings

Genesis 15.1-12,17-18	God promises blessings to Abraham
Psalms 27	The desire to dwell in the Lord's house
Philippians 3.17 – 4.1	Christian behaviour; our heavenly destination
Luke 13.31-35	Herod the fox; Jerusalem is admonished

Opening Prayer

Lord Jesus Christ,
speak to our hearts in the stillness,
keep us steadfast in the foundation that cannot be shaken,
lift up our eyes to behold the vision of your glory;
and perfect our faith, now and always. Amen.

Society of Saint Francis

Gospel Reading

Herod the fox

³¹At that very hour some Pharisees came and said to him, 'Get away from here, for Herod wants to kill you.' ³²He said to them, 'Go and tell that fox for me, "Listen, I am casting out demons and performing cures today and tomorrow, and on the third day I finish my work. ³³Yet today, tomorrow, and the next day I must be on my way, because it is impossible for a prophet to be killed away from Jerusalem."

Jerusalem admonished

³⁴Jerusalem, Jerusalem, the city that kills the prophets and stones those who are sent to it! How often have I desired to gather your children together as a hen gathers her brood under her wings, and you were not willing! ³⁵See, your house is left to you. And I tell you, you will not see me until the time comes when you say, "Blessed is the one who comes in the name of the Lord."

Luke 13.31-35 NRSV¹

¹ *New Revised Standard Version Bible* is copyright © 1989 Division of Christian Education of the National Council of the Churches of Christ in the United States of America.

Comments and Questions

The Pharisees were a group that adhered to a strict interpretation of Judaism. They are mentioned twenty times in Luke's gospel and are often associated in the text with the scribes and teachers of the law. They were one of the groups most critical of Jesus, because he seemed to flout the rules and regulations they regarded as important. How could such a devout and serious religious group miss the significance of what Jesus did and taught?

Not all Pharisees were antagonistic to Jesus, though; some seemed more open to him (Luke 7.36; 11.37; 14.1). St Paul acknowledged, towards the end of his ministry, not 'I was a Pharisee', but 'I am a Pharisee' (Acts 23.6). Why would Pharisees want to help Jesus? What could they have in common with him?

The Herod mentioned here (v.32) is Herod Antipas, tetrarch of Galilee, who had beheaded John the Baptist. Herod had been curious about Jesus and had asked to see him (Luke 9.7-9). Now he seems to want to get rid of him.

The response of Jesus naming Herod as 'that fox' (v.32) is unclear in its implication. In the Old Testament the fox is considered destructive, but in the Greek literature the fox is considered clever. Which option would you go for, and why?

Jesus is not to be deflected by the death threat, but explains what he must do – his work will come to an end, but not yet. He says in effect that he will not be killed under Herod's jurisdiction (Galilee), for he must go to Jerusalem.

His expression, 'on the third day I finish my work' (v.32), speaks directly of the limited time he has for his ministry, and indirectly of what will happen when he gets to Jerusalem – his death and resurrection – (cf. John 5.36; 17.4; 19.28; Hebrews 2.10).

Perhaps the mention of Jerusalem in v.33 leads to the lament that follows. Luke mentions Jerusalem ninety times (in Luke and Acts), the rest of the New Testament forty-nine times, so it is obviously of central significance.

In Luke's account Jesus has not yet gone to Jerusalem, yet the lament implies a ministry there. There are several possibilities: (a) Jesus had already been to Jerusalem, unrecorded by Luke; (b) his ministry there is

being described in advance; (c) Jesus is prophesying about the future as if it has already happened; (d) Jesus is not referring to himself but to God, quoting perhaps God's lament over the city (cf. 2 Esdras 1.28-30)²; (e) the 'premature' lament offers time for repentance, to receive pardon for sin, and to welcome God's reign. Can the future be said to be contained in the present?

'Blessed is the one who comes in the name of the Lord' looks forward to the entry of Jesus into Jerusalem, quoting Psalm 118.26, a processional psalm. What does Jerusalem symbolise for you?

Quotations

1

The present moment is the only moment in which any kind of action is possible. If I want to do the will of God, I must recognise that the divine will is always something I must do now — I cannot receive now what God will offer me tomorrow. But I can receive now what he is offering me now. And each moment God is offering me some grace (gift) for my acceptance or some command for my obedience.

J. Neville Ward, 1915–1992

2

On that day the Lord made a covenant with Abram, saying, 'To your descendants I give this land, from the river of Egypt to the great river, the river Euphrates.'

Genesis 15.18

3

You're shaking ... so am I. It's because of Jerusalem, isn't it? One doesn't go to Jerusalem, one returns to it. That's one of its mysteries.

A Beggar in Jerusalem / Elie Wiesel. 1968

4

In Jerusalem there are houses, sewage, buses, lampposts. Yet she is more than a city among cities; she is a city full of vision, a city with an

² 'I asked you to be my people so that I could be your God, I asked you to be my children so that I could be your father. I gathered you together just as a hen gathers her chicks under her wings.' 2 Esdras 1.29-30