

## Luke 13 31 – 35

### In the Thick of Crisis!

Have you ever had one of those sleepless nights where something was facing you the next day that would not let you rest? Maybe you have had the experience of being on a dangerous road, headed for incredible difficulty and there was nothing you could do about it? Many of us have had to endure times of personal trial that we simply could not avoid. No one else could do it, or go through it for us.

In our scripture today, we gain an amazing glimpse into the inner life of Jesus' at a critical time in his life. There is a price on his head. Jesus is close to looking death square in the face. What seems to be friendly advice comes from an unlikely source, "Get out of town," the Pharisees tell him, "Herod wants to kill you!"

"Someone wants to kill you!" I am sure that would make you want to sit up and pay attention?

The chances of any one of us having to go through this particular crisis are remote. But... we all will go through a dark valley sometime - somewhere - someday. It may be the loss of someone we love, a life threatening illness, the breakup of a relationship, or the loss of a job. But... the question isn't will crisis hit; it's when will a crisis come and how will we handle it?

The "Good News" is that Christ has been there. Jesus is with us in "the thick of things" and very much in touch with us in the depth of our struggles. Not only was there a price on Jesus' head, he knew that storm clouds were gathering and he knew for certain that he was headed for a confrontation with death.

How does he handle it? If you and I can get in touch with, and develop the principles Jesus used to get through this toughest of times, then we can put them into practice in our own lives.

So how did he do it? Between the lines of the scripture reading, there are three central principles at work in Jesus' life.

Firstly: Jesus was inner directed, and not outer directed.

Have you ever noticed how all kinds of people have great ideas for your life? You find yourself in the midst of personal anguish and it seems as though everybody in your life has an opinion. Many well meaning folk even have others who have an idea for you! "My Aunt Mary went through exactly what you are going through and she....." Or, there might be "experts" in your life who have the answer for you. Perhaps the most distressing are the, "Woulda', shoulda', coulda'" people who somehow enjoy picking at other people's wounds. It is exactly at this time you need a strong sense of inner direction.

When the Pharisees came with the message, "Herod wants to kill you," Jesus responds with the fact that he intends to finish his work. The outer circumstances of his life were powerful and difficult. Yet, the power of his inner life was stronger. His direction came from the inner work of the Spirit of God... what the Bible calls, "The still small voice."

No matter how hectic and troubled our outer circumstances may be, we gain strength when we take time to develop our inner lives. The press of duties and overloaded diaries conspire to keep us from giving attention to what's inside. Let us take time this Lent to seek that "still small voice". Make constant conscious contact with God a part of our daily living. If you trace Jesus' steps through the gospels, you will find him regularly taking time out for contact with God.

Here's a key. Our inner life grows and matures by disciplined development. Even a beginner can begin to make daily conversation with God a priority. Talk to God about anything and everything. All that matters is that you build a sense of the presence of God in each moment. But, be sure of this... when times of crisis come and we need to call on our inner resources, only what we've developed will be available.

Secondly: Jesus was very clear about the driving force of his life.

In spite of the fact that Herod has put a price on Jesus' head, he is absolutely clear about the driving force of his life. Everywhere he went, Jesus brought evidence of God's love. In Biblical language, that translates to... Jesus brought the Kingdom of God wherever he went. The Kingdom of God is wherever God is in charge, and where God is in charge, there is love, joy, and peace.

The driving force of Jesus' life was that God should be in charge - at all times and in every place. Whether Herod or anybody else was after his life, Jesus was at peace within because where God is in charge, things are going to work according to God's will. St. Paul says it this way, "We know that all things work together for good for those who love God, who are called according to his purpose" [Rom. 8:28]

It works in this way. When I am clear about the love of God for me, and my love for God, I am secure. God is in fact (not just in principle) the driving force of my life! However, I simply am not able to live in that mode all the time. I feel especially happy when I have periods where I

live in that manner even much of the time. I can tell you that when I function with this principle in the foreground (God's love for me and my love for God), there is much more serenity in my life. No matter what is going on in the outer world.

Thirdly: Jesus stayed focused on the goal of his life no matter what was happening around him.

The driving force and the goal of Jesus' life are closely related. The driving force of his life was to bring the Kingdom of God to everyone around him. The basic goal is what underlies the whole Kingdom of God. Listen once again to these wistful words, " Jerusalem, 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!"

Amazing! This is absolute, mind boggling, unconditional love. The love of God as it plays out before our very eyes in the life of Jesus is a love that persists in spite of rejection. It is still

there after being scoffed at, hounded and killed! The ultimate crisis of Jesus' life, his agonising death on a cross, could not destroy his love... his ultimate goal.

What would you say is your single most important goal in all of life? When all is said and done... when you have lived your life, done your best and come to the end of the road, what will be the goal you have reached? Crisis will come and go. Hard times will dog the road you have travelled. Sometimes, devastating experiences will press hard on your soul. But when God calls us - what will be that bottom line goal of life you have sought to achieve?

Can there be any greater goal in life than to do this one thing... to bring the amazing, unconditional love of God to someone else? This is the goal that can revolutionise your life. It will build your inner life and when times of trial come, it will provide a solid place within. And when you have solid ground within, the outer voices that seek to direct your life will diminish. It is then you begin to discover the "still small voice of God in your inner life!"