

**Sermon – 2<sup>nd</sup> Lent**  
**Luke 13:31-35**  
**March 17, 2019**

**“Running...With the Wind”**

Bob Seger wrote a song in the 70’s titled “*Against the Wind*”, a ballad about growing up, which in case you hadn’t noticed leads to growing old, and a growing realization that life has a prevailing wind that seems to like being in your face. Running against that wind meant having to choose from among “*oh so many roads*”, friends who one day become strangers, and love that “*swore that it never would end*” – but did anyway. What was left of life was deadlines and commitments, trying to figure out “*what to leave in, what to leave out.*” It’s not a gloomy song – but one can’t help wonder if the “older now” Mr. Seger figured the running was worth it.

Many people today wonder if life is worth it. They sense their ceiling is set by so many things out of their control and with every “*what will they think of next cheating scandal*” that is unveiled in our society – some wonder if the whole enterprise of life is plain rigged. The casualty of all this is that many people, especially young ones, wonder if it’s worth the effort to honor commitments and conscience. A glance of the internet tells them that others, if they had any convictions to begin with don’t seem to mind setting them aside. What to leave in, what to leave out becomes what to believe, what to ignore, what to stand for, and what to take a pass on. We’re all just running against the wind.

Yet not all that long ago Winston Churchill gave a speech in which his only words were; “*never give up.*” The British Prime Minister is said to have stood up five times, approached the podium, scanned the audience, said those three little words, and sat back down to let his audience ponder them good and hard. Has the church forgotten that it has received the same message from the God? God has promised never to give up on us. Old and New Testament together are a record of how God never, never, never, never, never gives up.

Towards God Adam and Eve disobeyed, Abraham doubted, Sarah laughed, Moses tried to pass the buck, David had outbursts of anger and adultery, his successors bowed down to idols and Israel fell into pieces and became exiles – and that’s just the Old Testament. In the New John the Baptist was beheaded, Jesus mostly misunderstood and often ignored, Peter denied he even knew Christ and the disciples all ran away – yet God never, never, never, never, never gave up on those men and women. To never give up should be the hallmark of every Christian. But to do so we have to brace ourselves for some work in windy conditions.

In our story today, Jesus is given a friendly warning by some men called Pharisees – and if you recall anything about them you’d know why Jesus was wary of the warning. With friends like these who needed enemies? King Herod was a thorn in Jesus side but it was Jerusalem and its people, who would soon cry “*blessed is he who comes in the name of the Lord*” who were the arrow through our Lord’s heart. So that’s where his focus was. How often God had sent

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Jerusalem messengers – and how often they’d been ignored, or worse? God - running against the wind.

Dear people, Jesus Christ always took the high road, but that was seldom the easy one. Sin, death and the devil take no holidays – so Jesus said “*today and tomorrow and the next I have things to do.*” Yet I read a story recently that claimed that convenience was the new American “vice”. The conclusion of the author was that ease, not necessarily wealth but ease of life in general was eroding our souls and our commitments to see things through. The Pharisee’s suggestion to Jesus was much like that – ‘*Herod is after you - he has you marked for death. Lay low for a while, take a break, turn off your newsfeed Rabbi.*’

But to Jesus, Herod was a gust of wind with little force, a fox plotting but powerless against God’s mission in the world. The irony of course in this story is that to prove he’ll never give in, Jesus does give up - himself that is. He’ll travel into the whirlwind of Jerusalem and meet head on the traumatic tradition of that city – expressed in his words “*Jerusalem, the city that kills the prophets and stones those who are sent to it.*” Jesus would give up everything in order to give them, and like them us, everything.

You know as well as I do that normally “giving up” is a no-no in our culture. Lent may be the only time left when “giving up” is entertained, but even then it’s the more mundane or peripheral stuff - coffee or carbs, Facebook on Fridays, that sort of thing. Sometimes it does fall on us to make a hard call and give up. It might be a career sucking the wind out of our soul, a relationship blowing away our conception of love and trust – a grudge gouging out a cavity in our heart, and attitude tainting everything it touches. Course we definitely ought to give up our notion that this life is all there is and no higher vista exists than the one we’re perched on.

Jesus didn’t “give in” to the Pharisee’s warnings to adjust life to his advantage. He went on his way, a better way by the way – minding his Father’s business, living a servant life without limit. What would happen if God’s people did that – and gave up thinking that the life we’re living right now, its sin stained presumptions and disillusionments that is, is the only life we’ll know or ever want? What if you chose instead to never give up wanting what Jesus wanted – to do his Father’s will today, tomorrow, and the next? I think you’d run into some resistance, maybe a lot, but I also think you’d find you’d actually be “running with the wind” - God’ holy breath, God’s Holy Spirit. That’s how Jesus blew into Jerusalem. So in that case, let our prayer be “*blow wind, blow.*”  
AMEN