

“Under the Wings”

*Gathered up in Jesus – part #2
from umcdiscipleship.org*

Luke 13:31-35

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[49] In northern Michigan, we experience some sudden and extreme weather. Most of the hardy Yoopers around here shrug it off or wait ten minutes for the weather to change, and just go on with their lives. But sometimes, storms catch us by surprise and can even turn deadly. So it is a wise thing to be prepared and know where the nearest shelter is.

One time when our children were very young, I remember huddling in our basement with them because the tornado siren had gone off, right next to our house. I mean, literally, next to our house. We could see the siren from our yard. Thick, black clouds rolled in, and we went downstairs and waited. The storm blew by, and we were safe, but my children had nightmares for a few days after. The only thing we could do as parents was hold them in our arms and reassure them.

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In our spiritual lives, it is good to heed the warnings and know who offers us shelter. That's why this passage in Luke 13 has some warning and advice for us today.

Jesus himself was under a threat. King Herod was out to get him. And the Pharisees weren't friendly to him, either. They told Jesus to get away, get out of Galilee, go to Judea, specifically, to Jerusalem.

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[52] Jesus is not intimidated by Herod. Jesus knows God has his back. Jesus says, “Go tell that fox...” Either Jesus is ridiculing Herod or calling him a weasel, but either way, Jesus is committed to God’s plan for him. Jesus announces, “I will complete my work on the third day.” Exactly on time, intentionally, not a day early or a day late. Jesus knows God’s timing is what matters, not the threat of any storm, natural, political, or otherwise.

I suppose I could just say, “In the face of danger, trust God, laugh it off, and everything will be fine.” On a superficial level, that could be the message of this passage, but the author of Luke turns this witty banter into something darker and more serious in the next section.

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What happens in Jerusalem? To put it bluntly, people die. Specifically, the prophets sent by God. The people who brought God’s message were humiliated, tortured, and executed in the city whose name ironically means “city of peace.” Jesus reveals his ageless divinity when he claims, “How often have I wanted to gather your people just as a hen gathers her chicks under her wings.” Since the founding of Jerusalem, through the Babylonian exile and the return, to occupation by the Romans, Jesus has watched and noticed and called to the people of Israel. But they wouldn’t listen.

[54] Part of the reason I believe people reject Jesus is because they think they have everything they need: “Hey, everything’s going great, God. I don’t need saving! Thanks, anyway.” When we trust in our own strength and abilities to save us, it’s like huddling outside on a hill in a thunderstorm with a tiny umbrella.

Is that really good enough, when there is a nice, strong shelter nearby? All you have to do is knock, and the door will open to you.

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It should be natural for us to seek shelter. I remember my grandmother’s hen house. Those chickens would scatter everywhere when you opened the door. They would seek out the best hiding spots, the most secure places, whenever they were threatened. Even our new dog, Raven, will dive into her kennel, or sit in her special corner, because that’s where she feels safe.

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We are all faced with a choice. We can try to outrun our problems and hide from them, or we can turn to the one who calls us, like a mother bird, saying, “Over here. I’ve got you.” There will always be people who promise us the world. You can buy security systems, lock, alarms, but you will never be 100% certain of

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Do you hear the voice of the one calling you not to run away and hide, but be found and take shelter under his wings?

Will you trust him? It's simple, but not easy.

Your life is worth saving. That's why Jesus died on the cross, to save you. And just like that day he cried out to Jerusalem, he now calls your name. Over and over again. "Come to me. Rest in me. Let me hold you, shelter you, protect you. I've got this. Trust me."

[58] Proverbs 3:5 says to trust in the Lord with all your heart and do not lean on your own understanding. If we are going to experience real peace in our souls, we are going to have to trust Jesus with our lives. We have to respond to his call to shelter us, to forgive us, to renew and transform us into the people God intends us to be. Not scared. Not scurrying for temporary fixes or running away from our problems. Bold, courageous disciples who know that nothing that could ever happen to us will destroy us, because we are safe under his wings.

Let's pray.

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Like an eagle lifting up her weary children, God will carry you.

Like a mother hen gathering her brood, Jesus Christ will shelter you.

"Like the murmur of the dove's song," the Holy Spirit will dwell with you.

Do not be afraid. Go forth in God's peace. Amen.

Memory verse: Proverbs 3:5 (NIV)

"Trust in the Lord with all your heart and lean not on your own understanding."

Reflection questions:

1. To whom do you go for comfort in stressful times?
2. In Luke 13:32, Jesus says, "On the third day, I will reach my goal." What is that goal?
3. Why does Jesus have no fear of Herod?

4. Why did Jerusalem/Israel reject Jesus' offer? What does that say about our own hearts?
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Your life is worth saving. That's why Jesus died on the cross, to save you. And just like that day he cried out to Jerusalem, he now calls your name. Over and over again. "Come to me. Rest in me. Let me hold you, shelter you, protect you. I've got this. Trust me."

[58] Proverbs 3:5 says to trust in the Lord with all your heart and do not lean on your own understanding. If we are going to experience real peace in our souls, we are going to have to trust Jesus with our lives. We have to respond to his call to shelter us, to forgive us, to renew and transform us into the people God intends us to be. Not scared. Not scurrying for temporary fixes or running away from our problems. Bold, courageous disciples who know that nothing that could ever happen to us will destroy us, because we are safe under his wings.

Let's pray.

DISMISSAL WITH BLESSING *by Barbara K. Lunblad*

Like an eagle lifting up her weary children, God will carry you.

Like a mother hen gathering her brood, Jesus Christ will shelter you.

"Like the murmur of the dove's song," the Holy Spirit will dwell with you.

Do not be afraid. Go forth in God's peace. Amen.

Memory verse: Proverbs 3:5 (NIV)

"Trust in the Lord with all your heart and lean not on your own understanding."

Reflection questions:

1. To whom do you go for comfort in stressful times?
2. In Luke 13:32, Jesus says, "On the third day, I will reach my goal." What is that goal?
3. Why does Jesus have no fear of Herod?

4. Why did Jerusalem/Israel reject Jesus' offer? What does that say about our own hearts?
5. What kind of comfort does Jesus offer? What protection does he give us? Have you accepted that offer?

“Under the Wings”

*Gathered up in Jesus – part #2
from umcdiscipleship.org*

Luke 13:31-35

[48] (Welcome, prayer)

[49] In northern Michigan, we experience some sudden and extreme weather. Most of the hardy Yoopers around here shrug it off or wait ten minutes for the weather to change, and just go on with their lives. But sometimes, storms catch us by surprise and can even turn deadly. So it is a wise thing to be prepared and know where the nearest shelter is.

One time when our children were very young, I remember huddling in our basement with them because the tornado siren had gone off, right next to our house. I mean, literally, next to our house. We could see the siren from our yard. Thick, black clouds rolled in, and we went downstairs and waited. The storm blew by, and we were safe, but my children had nightmares for a few days after. The only thing we could do as parents was hold them in our arms and reassure them.

Once when Katja and I went canoeing, we got caught in a sudden lightning storm, and it was bad. We left the river and huddled in some trees. We even thought about lifting the canoe over our heads, but it was made of aluminum, and that seemed like a bad idea. We were cold, wet, and miserable. If I had my choice, I'd much rather be in a basement than a forest during a storm.

[50] These days we have advance weather forecasts that are reasonably accurate. We hardly get caught by surprise, unless we refuse to heed the warnings. In that case, by the time we do realize what's happening, it may be too late to seek shelter.

In our spiritual lives, it is good to heed the warnings and know who offers us shelter. That's why this passage in Luke 13 has some warning and advice for us today.

Jesus himself was under a threat. King Herod was out to get him. And the Pharisees weren't friendly to him, either. They told Jesus to get away, get out of Galilee, go to Judea, specifically, to Jerusalem.

[51] There is an expression, “laughing the face of danger.” Simba, the little lion, utters this in the movie, “The Lion King”, just before going to the elephant’s graveyard. While I do not recommend recklessness, it’s good to have courage in the face of threats.

[52] Jesus is not intimidated by Herod. Jesus knows God has his back. Jesus says, “Go tell that fox...” Either Jesus is ridiculing Herod or calling him a weasel, but either way, Jesus is committed to God’s plan for him. Jesus announces, “I will complete my work on the third day.” Exactly on time, intentionally, not a day early or a day late. Jesus knows God’s timing is what matters, not the threat of any storm, natural, political, or otherwise.

I suppose I could just say, “In the face of danger, trust God, laugh it off, and everything will be fine.” On a superficial level, that could be the message of this passage, but the author of Luke turns this witty banter into something darker and more serious in the next section.

[53] Jesus begins a lament, and we know it’s serious, because he repeats himself. How do you know when you’re in trouble? When your parents have to say your name twice. “Eric...Eric Max!” Oh, crap, that’s not good. So when Jesus says, “Jerusalem, Jerusalem,” it’s not because the city is hard of hearing. Jesus is experiencing extreme anguish for his own people. Jerusalem doesn’t just mean a geopolitical city – it is the symbol of their home. Like Washington D.C., Jerusalem is the place where the most important things in the nation happen.

What happens in Jerusalem? To put it bluntly, people die. Specifically, the prophets sent by God. The people who brought God’s message were humiliated, tortured, and executed in the city whose name ironically means “city of peace.” Jesus reveals his ageless divinity when he claims, “How often have I wanted to gather your people just as a hen gathers her chicks under her wings.” Since the founding of Jerusalem, through the Babylonian exile and the return, to occupation by the Romans, Jesus has watched and noticed and called to the people of Israel. But they wouldn’t listen.

[54] Part of the reason I believe people reject Jesus is because they think they have everything they need: “Hey, everything’s going great, God. I don’t need saving! Thanks, anyway.” When we trust in our own strength and abilities to save us, it’s like huddling outside on a hill in a thunderstorm with a tiny umbrella.

Is that really good enough, when there is a nice, strong shelter nearby? All you have to do is knock, and the door will open to you.

Shelter is in short supply these days. Like many of you, I’m heart-sick from the recent stories of Ukrainian refugees. I read one lady’s description of how to survive as a refugee.¹ Her 18-point “life hack” described her harrowing journey from Ukraine to Poland, a journey that normally takes 12 hours, but for her, it took three days. She explained what to take, what to leave behind, when to use the bathrooms, how to get onto an overcrowded train, and more. But what amazed me most was that she found shelter from amazing, kind people who were prepared to give it to her. (Seriously, if you are not supporting non-profits for refugees right now, consider again. Our own UMCOR offering is coming March 27th by the way.)

[55] Jesus promises shelter to all of us. In fact, in this very scripture, he is promising shelter and comfort to his killers! How amazing is Christ, that he is compassionate with those who hate him! Jesus compares himself to a mother hen, clucking to her chicks, “Come on. Over here. Find safety under my feathers.” Jesus calls to us.

It should be natural for us to seek shelter. I remember my grandmother’s hen house. Those chickens would scatter everywhere when you opened the door. They would seek out the best hiding spots, the most secure places, whenever they were threatened. Even our new dog, Raven, will dive into her kennel, or sit in her special corner, because that’s where she feels safe.

[56] Are you surrounded by threats? There’s enough trouble to go around lately. Maybe you long for a safe spot, a secret hideout, a shelter. Literally, for some people. Maybe you just want to get away from your problems, your conflicts, the fighting with other people.

We are all faced with a choice. We can try to outrun our problems and hide from them, or we can turn to the one who calls us, like a mother bird, saying, “Over here. I’ve got you.” There will always be people who promise us the world. You can buy security systems, lock, alarms, but you will never be 100% certain of

¹ <https://www.npr.org/2022/03/09/1085107118/russia-ukraine-lviv-train-evacuation-checklist>

your safety. There is only one who can save your soul, in this life and into eternity. That is Jesus.

[57] Whom do you really want to protect you?

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