

## **Views from the Pews - Jesus laments over Jerusalem**

The first of the two stories making up today's reading appears in Luke 13: 31 without parallels in the other gospels. It begins with a warning, that Jesus needs to beware of Herod Antipas, ruler of Galilee (not Herod the Great, based in Jerusalem). Luke does not explain why this Herod might have sought to kill Jesus. Herod had said, "John I beheaded; but who is this about whom I hear such things?" Perhaps Herod feared that Jesus might be, as some claimed, John the Baptist raised from the dead (Luke 9:7), or in some other way, a successor to John, equally willing to confront him with the same pointed criticism of Herod's marriage to his brother's wife (Mark 6:18).

Jesus' response to this warning (Luke 13:32-33) was a challenge to Herod. Jesus calling him a "fox" implies that Herod was known as a deceptive or wily person, perhaps both. Nevertheless, Jesus added that Herod could not prevent Jesus continuing on his journey to Jerusalem (Luke 9:51).

The second story has a parallel at Matthew 23:37-39, in almost identical wording. The lament is tinged with great sadness. Jerusalem had already been the place where First Testament prophets had been killed (Jeremiah 26:20-23; cf. Matthew 23:29-30; Acts 7:52) and where early Christian witnesses, including Stephen and James, would be martyred (Acts 7:59; 12:2). Jesus cries out in his grief at such historic tragedies, comparing himself to a hen with her chicks; he would gladly have protected the city, but his love for it and its people was ignored. From the beginning of his ministry, the leadership in Jerusalem had realized the threat he posed to them and to their version of a Judaism acceptable to the Romans. They refused to listen to anyone who proclaimed a different vision of the justice and the reign of God, so putting the city stood God's judgment.

Jesus pronounces doom upon the city, which was indeed followed by its destruction in A.D. 70. Jesus declared that the people of the city would not see him again until the messianic expectation of Psalm 118:26 ("Blessed is the one who comes in the name of the Lord") is fulfilled. In vain the excited crowd welcomed Jesus as he rode into Jerusalem a week ago in the same words: "Blessed is the king who comes in the name of the Lord!" (Luke 19:38). Alas, the time had not yet come.

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