



NEW HOPE

UNITED METHODIST CHURCH

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Second Sunday of Lent – 28 February 2010
Luke 13:31-35

Jesus' March to Jerusalem

About 2,300 years ago a young man by the name of Alexander walked into the history books when he led his army on a 16,000 mile march from his home in Greece all the way to India. This march wasn't just impressive because it was far-reaching; it was impressive because it was unstoppable.

Alexander didn't just travel this great distance **he fought his way through it and never once met an enemy that he didn't defeat**. The only reason he didn't go further was that his soldiers became homesick and wanted to return to Greece. Alexander's march was far-reaching in another way; it affects us today. **That's remarkable when you consider that Alexander never set foot in the United States.**

His far-reaching forays made **Greek culture and language** the standard of the world for over three centuries. Because of that we now have many **Greek words** in our language - words like biology, philosophy, telephone, and telescope. **Our art, architecture, and democratic form** of government have all been greatly influenced by the Greeks as well. What Alexander accomplished is impressive especially when you consider that he did it all by age 33! **It's no wonder he's called Alexander the Great.**

About 330 years after Alexander the Great died another remarkable 33 year old embarked on a march. Like Alexander's march this one was unstoppable. But because this march didn't seem to be nearly as far-reaching as Alexander's (about 90 miles in all) it was **not appreciated then** and often **remains unappreciated today.**

That's why today I'm inviting you to come with me to Israel to view Jesus' unstoppable and often unappreciated march to Jerusalem. Under inspection we'll see that it's a march worth recognizing and appreciating and glorifying. What a march indeed!

Jesus began his march to Jerusalem from Galilee. As he headed south the Pharisees brought word that Herod wanted to kill him and they urged Jesus to leave the vicinity at once. **Stop your march!**

What's wrong with that picture? Since when were the Pharisees concerned about Jesus' well being? They had wanted to kill him from the very beginning so why should they warn Jesus about a plot against his life now?

Perhaps they made the story up to frighten Jesus into hurrying to Jerusalem where they were waiting to silence him once and for all? Or maybe this was Herod's way of scaring Jesus out of his territory? We're told that when Herod heard about everything that Jesus was doing he thought that it might be John the Baptist come back to life (Luke 9:7). That was a scary thought for Herod because he had been the one who had ordered John's execution...and Herod was paranoid as we know too well.

Jesus was unfazed. He said to the Pharisees, ***"Go tell that fox, 'I will drive out demons and heal people today and tomorrow, and on the third day I will reach my goal.' In any case, I must***

keep going today and tomorrow and the next day—for surely no prophet can die outside Jerusalem!” (Luke 13:32, 33)

Jesus’ reply spoke to both the Pharisees and Herod. He showed that he wasn’t afraid of either of them. Why should he be? He had the power to drive out demons! Sure, Herod might be crafty like a fox and he may have arranged John the Baptist’s execution **but** that wasn’t going to cause Jesus to change his plans. He would continue to drive out demons, and heal the sick **where he wanted, when he wanted and no one was going to stop him – not even Herod**. And as for the Pharisees; well, they would get their opportunity to arrest and kill Jesus soon enough **but not until He was willing**.

Of course the Pharisees and Herod weren’t the first to try to get Jesus off track. **Last week** we heard how Satan tempted Jesus in the wilderness. In one of those temptations Satan showed Jesus all the kingdoms of the world and promised to give those to him if Jesus would only bow down and worship him.

Was it tempting? Sure it was. Satan wanted Jesus to think that this was the “*easy*” way out. Instead of having to put up with **slow disciples and vindictive enemies** Jesus could enjoy power and prestige **if only he would** only bow down. Nothing and no one; not even Satan was going to stop his march **to Jerusalem where He would die willingly and obediently for the sins of the world**.

Why Jerusalem? Why was Jesus so determined to march there? First of all he had prophesied that he would die in Jerusalem so he needed to keep his word and promises. (Matt. 16:21). Jerusalem was also the home of God’s temple and the place where all sacrifices were to be made. **What better place for the Lamb of God to sacrifice his life for the sins of the world?** No, it’s not surprising that Jesus would want to die in Jerusalem but it was ironic because Jerusalem means “**City of Peace**.”

Jerusalem **was anything but** a city of peace when it came to the way it treated God’s messengers. From the Old Testament we know how Jeremiah was persecuted and killed there for preaching the truth. **And now Jerusalem would put God’s own Son to death**.

Although Jesus’ march to Jerusalem would bring peace to the whole world it was not appreciated by many during Jesus’ time. As you can imagine, that made Jesus very sad. Listen! Hear the pain in Jesus’ voice as he said, “*O Jerusalem, Jerusalem, you who kill the prophets and stone those sent to you, how often I have longed to gather your children together, as a hen gathers her chicks under her wings, but you were not willing!*” (Luke 13:34)

Like a hen that chases after her chicks to keep them from harm, Jesus had attempted to gather the people of Jerusalem under his protection **but many refused**. People like the Pharisees thought that they could get to heaven on their own terms. Others, like the unrepentant thief on the cross, thought that it was more fun to mock Jesus.

People haven’t changed have they? Back in December I asked a young hospital security guard what he would say when he stood before God’s judgment. He said that he wouldn’t say a thing. He figured that God would accept him the way he was because he had been a good guy. He wasn’t interested in discussing or learning more. He went on to say, *that religion was too restrictive. He was afraid that if he became a Christian, or even studied the Bible that it would take all the fun out of life. Many people, even Christians feel this way!*

I wonder if that isn’t sometimes our take on God’s Word? When you hear that Jesus wants to gather you as a hen gathers her chicks **is your first impulse to run the other way because you don’t want to be controlled?** If so then you aren’t getting the picture. When Jesus describes himself as a hen that gathers her chicks under her wings he’s describing how **he wants to protect, not restrict us**.

He stood over us on the cross and died a horrible death so we would not have to. To think that Jesus wants to gather us to restrict our fun and freedom is absolute foolishness.

Do you think that it's restrictive to hang out in the basement when there's a tornado threatening? Of course not! It's the wise thing to do.

Even God's law that tells us what to do and what not to do is not as restrictive as you might think. **This Law, His Word is the secret to a happy life. Life is a lot more fun** when you obey your parents, as you'll end up avoiding a lot of mistakes they have made. **Life is a lot more peaceful** when you remain faithful to your spouse, as you won't have to deal with marital strife. **Life is so much more worry free** when you don't covet but remain thankful for what God has given you...and the list goes on. You can fill in the blanks...because we all can tell a story or too when we did not follow His Law and we paid the consequences short term or long term.

God's law is like a guardrail on a road leading down a steep mountain. The guardrail doesn't restrict your car's freedom; it keeps the car from losing it and going off the road and over a cliff. **If you have been tempted to put your relationship with God on the back burner until you get older, married, have kids, or retire...don't be foolish.**

Jesus said, *"Look, your house is left to you desolate. I tell you, you will not see me again until you say, 'Blessed is he who comes in the name of the Lord'" (Luke 13:35).*

Because the Jews rejected him, Jesus pronounced judgment on them. In 70 AD their beloved house, the city of Jerusalem, was utterly destroyed by the Romans.

Jesus' march to Jerusalem might not seem as impressive as Alexander's incursion in to India, but don't dismiss it as an unimportant sidelight to history. **Jesus' march was actually much more far-reaching than Alexander's.**

The truth is; God used Alexander's march to prepare the world for Jesus' march. Through Alexander, God put a common language and good roads in place so that the news of Jesus' death and resurrection could spread quickly throughout the known world.

What Alexander did has affected people for centuries, **but what Jesus did affects every person that ever lived – both those who came before him and those of us who live after him.**

Jesus' march is unmatched because he didn't just go to Jerusalem; he marched to hell and back. And unlike Alexander who marched to make a name for himself, **Jesus marched to make a name for us – "Children of God.**