

Luke 13:31-35

Courage and Vulnerability

In the passage we just heard from the Gospel of Luke, we encounter Jesus at a moment of both vulnerability and immense courage. The Pharisees warn him that Herod, the ruler, is out to kill him, but rather than fleeing or cowering in fear, Jesus responds with words of boldness and determination. He continues his mission, unshaken by the threat, and reveals a deep longing in his heart for the city of Jerusalem. Jesus expresses a tender desire to gather the people of the city under His wings like a mother hen gathers her chicks, but he laments that they have refused his love and protection.

In this passage we see Jesus embodying three key qualities that speak to us as followers of Christ: vulnerability, courage, and strength. These are not qualities we often associate with the traditional idea of strength, yet they are qualities of Jesus and these are also qualities we are called to live into as God's people. Let's look at how Jesus, as spoken about in this passage, embodies these qualities and how we are invited to live in such a way that reflects vulnerability, courage, and strength—qualities that come from being grounded in our faith and understanding of Jesus.

In the story, Jesus is warned by the Pharisees that Herod wants to kill him. Now, Herod was a powerful ruler, someone who could easily have ended Jesus' life. In the face of this threat, one might expect Jesus to retreat to safety, or at the very least, take precautions to protect himself. But Jesus does not do that. Instead, he replies to the Pharisees, telling them to pass along the message that he will continue his work of healing and casting out demons. He will not be deterred from his mission, and in doing so, Jesus shows a remarkable kind of vulnerability.

This vulnerability is not weakness, but an openheartedness—a willingness to engage deeply with the world, even when it means facing danger. Jesus could have hidden himself from Herod's threat, but he chose to remain open and present to the people, to continue doing the work of the God and God's kingdom, regardless of the cost.

Even more so Jesus expresses a profound vulnerability in his words to the city of Jerusalem: "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). This is a beautiful and deeply emotional image. Jesus is saying, "I long to love you, to protect you, to draw you near to me." And yet, the people of Jerusalem have rejected him. This expression is

not one of anger or frustration, but of sorrow. The vulnerability of Jesus here reveals the depth of God's love—God loves so deeply that God is willing to expose Godself to rejection, to pain, and to loss, just for the chance to gather people to him.

As followers of Jesus, we are called to embody this same kind of vulnerability. Living vulnerably before God means being open to God's love and presence, even when it feels risky. It means allowing ourselves to feel the depth of God's affection and longing for us, and being willing to embrace the call placed on our lives, even when it involves stepping into uncertainty or discomfort.

In our relationships with others, vulnerability means allowing ourselves to love and be loved, to offer care and compassion, even when there is the possibility of rejection or hurt. It's easy to guard our hearts, to put up walls to protect ourselves from pain. But Jesus shows us that true love involves opening ourselves up, allowing others to see us for who we are, and being willing to love them without holding back. This is the kind of vulnerability we are called to imitate—a vulnerability that reflects the heart of God, who is willing to be rejected, misunderstood, and even killed, just to offer His love.

While Jesus is vulnerable, he is also incredibly courageous. The threat of Herod's wrath is real, but Jesus does not shy away from it. Instead, Jesus presses forward with his mission. He declares, "Today and tomorrow I will drive out demons and heal the sick, and on the third day I will reach my goal" (Luke 13:32). Jesus knows that his life is in danger, yet he moves forward with steadfast determination everyday.

In saying that he will "reach his goal," Jesus is expressing his resolve to fulfill the mission given to him by God, regardless of the cost. His courage comes not from an absence of fear, but from Jesus unwavering commitment to God's plan. He is aware of the risks, but knows that God's purposes are greater than the dangers he faces. Courage, in this sense, is not the absence of fear, but the willingness to act in faith despite fear.

Jesus' courage is grounded in his trust in God's will. Jesus doesn't act recklessly or out of bravado; he acts with divine purpose. This is important for us to understand. Courage isn't about charging into situations without thought. It's about living faithfully and fearlessly in alignment with God's will, knowing that God is with us and that God's purposes will ultimately prevail.

We, too, are called to live courageously. In a world that often seems hostile to the message of the Gospel, it can be easy to shrink back, to stay silent, or to conform to the

expectations of society. But Jesus calls us to live with courage—courage to stand firm in our faith, to speak truth when it is hard, and to love others boldly, even when it costs us.

Courage doesn't always look like grand acts of heroism. It can be as simple as standing firm in the face of opposition, speaking up for justice when it's uncomfortable, or continuing to love someone who is difficult to love. Courage means doing what God asks of us, even when we are afraid, because we trust that God is with us and that His purposes are always good.

Courage also means living in the reality of our own vulnerability—recognizing that there will be times when we will be rejected or misunderstood, but choosing to press forward anyway. Just as Jesus continued his work despite the threat of Herod, we are called to move forward in faith, knowing that our courage will be sustained by God's presence.

The final quality that Jesus embodies in this passage is strength. This is not a strength that is loud or overbearing, but a quiet, enduring strength that comes from being grounded in the will of God. Jesus knows this mission will ultimately lead to the cross, and speaks of the inevitability of that death, acknowledging that it will happen in Jerusalem, the city that has rejected the prophets and messengers of God. Yet, despite the rejection Jesus faces, he does not waver in his purpose.

Strength, in Jesus' case, is not about resisting the challenges he faces. It is about enduring with faith and resolve, knowing that God's power and purpose, God compassion and strength, is greater than anything else. The strength of Jesus is rooted in his unwavering connection to God and in the certainty that God's work will be accomplished.

We, too, are called to live with this kind of strength—a strength that is rooted not in our own power, but in God's name. Our strength is not about physical might or personal achievement; it is about endurance. It is about standing firm in the face of challenges, knowing that God's will will prevail, even when it seems impossible.

Strength comes from knowing that we are not alone in our struggles. God's name gives us the strength to continue when we feel weak, to persevere when we feel like giving up, and to trust that God is with us through it all. Just as Jesus endured the cross knowing that it was the way to freedom for people we are called to endure the difficulties of life, trusting that God will use us and God's purpose will be fulfilled in and through us.

As we reflect on this passage, we see that God's is not distant or abstract. God reveals vulnerability, courage, and strength. Jesus came in the name of God, and in his life, death, and resurrection, Jesus perfectly embodied these qualities. This image of a mother hen gathering her chicks under her wing is an image of Jesus who in the name of God embraces vulnerability, stands with courage, and endures with strength.

With the vulnerable yet courage image we too are called to live with vulnerably offering our hearts to God and to others, courageously standing firm in the faith, and drawing our strength from the unshakable foundation of God's will.

As we consider this image of God, we remember that God is not just power and might alone, but a God of love, vulnerability, courage, and strength. Jesus shows us that these qualities are not in opposition, but work together to create a life that is grounded in God's will.

May we, as Jesus followers, live boldly, embodying vulnerability, courage, and strength in our daily lives. And may we always remember that we do not walk this journey alone—God is with us, empowering us to live faithfully and courageously, even in the face of opposition.

I speak to you in the name of the God who gather her chicks under her wings for protection and strength. In Christ, with Christ, and through Christ. Amen.