



Sunday Reflection

Ordinary Time

in the Charges of St Margarets, Renfrew
& St Johns, Johnstone



For Sunday 13 March 2022

Lent 2

*Let us come with joy, thanksgiving and humility to the Lord – Father, Son and Holy Spirit
– whose desire is that we should live in the newness of life which Jesus has won for us
on the cross.*

Reflection for this week's Gospel teaching

**"Yet today, tomorrow, and the next day I must be on my way,
because it is impossible for a prophet to be killed outside of
Jerusalem." Luke 13:33**

An Illustration to set the scene

In 2015 the fiftieth anniversary of the death of Winston Churchill was celebrated with the appropriate solemnity and thanksgiving.

Churchill was of course a remarkable man – a politician, writer and artist, who had already done far more than many of us achieve in a whole lifetime before he became British prime minister in World War Two.

Born in 1874, he served as a young officer in the British Army, seeing action in India, Sudan and the Second Boer War.

He entered Parliament as a Conservative in 1900 but defected to the Liberal Party, with whom he served as President of the Board of Trade, Home Secretary and First Lord of the Admiralty. Crossing the floor back to the Conservative Party, he became Chancellor of the Exchequer.

The 1930s are known as Churchill's "wilderness years", when he was out of office and gave himself to writing, most notably warning of the rise of Hitler and the Nazi Party. His writings and speeches established him as leader of the policy of "no surrender".

This put him in a strong position to become the prime minister who would play a pivotal role in defeating Nazi Germany.

Looking at the teaching of the Gospel

Today's reading starts with some Pharisees warning Jesus that Herod is out to kill him.

These people may have been genuinely sympathetic to Jesus or may have been emissaries of Herod, intentionally seeking to frighten Jesus out of Herod's domain.

Whichever was the case, Jesus' reply is uncompromising.

With no respect for Herod, referring to him as "that fox", Jesus tells the Pharisees to take a message back: "Listen, I am casting out demons and performing cures today and tomorrow, and on the third day I finish my work."

We must surely doubt that Herod ever received this message, but if he did, he would probably have thought it meant simply that Jesus would do as he pleased: if he wanted to stay a further three days, then he would.

But Jesus' reply goes on, "Yet today, tomorrow, and the next day I must be on my way, because it is impossible for a prophet to be killed outside of Jerusalem".

This is where we touch on the theme of destiny in the life of Christ. Jesus has a clear awareness that he will meet his fate in Jerusalem, and his reference to three days is a reference to his time in the tomb.

The point is to tell us that Jesus' death by the terrible torture of crucifixion was no tragic accident that would bring his ministry to a premature and meaningless halt.

Rather, this was to be the moment above all other moments for which he had become incarnate. His death would be the climax of his life, because in that death he, the sinless Son of God, bore the sins of us all and paid the price of our rebellion against God.

But if these events will paradoxically constitute a victory for Jesus, they will, he says, be a disaster for Jerusalem: "Jerusalem, Jerusalem, the city that kills the prophets and stones those who are sent to it!" The contrast is stark between Jesus, who fulfils his destiny, and the people of Jerusalem, who do not.

How can we reflect on the application to our lives?

The question for us, then, is which category will we be found in?

Will we stand with Jesus, seeking and fulfilling our destiny in and through him?

Will we be faithful to God's purposes in Jesus Christ even when, like Churchill, we find ourselves in a "wilderness" period?

Will we seek the indwelling power of God's Spirit to encourage and embolden us in difficult times?

Indeed, are we prepared to suffer for Jesus' sake as Jesus suffered for ours?

Many Christians in other parts of the world do suffer greatly: the loss of status, the loss of liberty and even the loss of life, but count that as the price that must be paid to be true children of God who take the apostle Paul at his word when he writes in today's Philippians reading: "our citizenship is in heaven".

So what is your destiny?

What work is God calling you to do in the name of Jesus and for the kingdom of God?

"Yet today, tomorrow, and the next day I must be on my way, because it is impossible for a prophet to be killed outside of Jerusalem." *Luke 13:33*

Please share your response to this reflection to Rector@SECStJohnStMargaret.org.uk – did anything speak to you? Did you feel challenged, angered, consoled by something in the words? How did God' spirit move you as you read it? Have you shared the words with someone else? Is this a worthwhile thing to make available to folk whilst some folk are not able to meet for corporate worship to share in word and sacrament? What are your thoughts?

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