**Resolved to Save Us**

Based on [Luke 13:31-35](http://biblia.com/books/esv/Lk13.31-35)

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Lent 2

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In picking up my son Noah from school, I can’t help but notice some of the posters on the walls there, and the different slogans and motivational words posted. Some of them are innocent enough; others very helpful…bible passages sometimes. One day, waiting for Noah’s class to be dismissed I noticed a poster on the wall that simply said, “Never give up.”

I get it. What the poster means to do is encourage steadfastness and resolve. If you’re in the middle of an art project, or a math problem, or running the 500 metre relay and you feel like you're running out of steam...don’t just give up because it’s getting hard. Work at it; get through it; apply yourself. Never just "give up." "You can do it." That’s good advice, right? Positive. Motivational.

There is a turning point in the ministry of Jesus, and it is shown in Luke 9:51, which says, “When the days drew near for Jesus to be taken up, he **set his face to go to Jerusalem**.” He “set his face”, that’s an idiom. It means he dug in his heels, he was determined, he was resolved and he wasn't going to give up.

Jesus set his face towards Jerusalem because he is a prophet, and he knew he was going there to die. Jesus says, “**For it cannot be that a prophet should perish away from Jerusalem**” (Luke 13:33). He laments, “**O Jerusalem, Jerusalem, the city that kills the prophets and stones those who are sent to it**” (Luke 13:34). It is ironic, Jerusalem was the holy city. It was the place where King David reigned over all of Israel in its Golden Age. It is where Solomon built God’s Temple and where God’s Temple was to that day. Jerusalem, it was God’s city, the city of his people. And yet, the people had a history of killing God’s prophets there.

This is not unlike the church today. In the bars or nightclubs you might expect to find the rejection of God and his word. But what's shocking is when you see unchristian words and actions occur right in God's church. In his holy place. It is ironic, but it's nothing new. The prophets of old were stoned, not by unbelievers, but by God's chosen people in his own holy city. This is a good reminder that it is not a city, or a building, or a place where God resides. He resides in his Word, and in the hearts of those who gather to hear it.

The leaders in Jerusalem had resolved to kill Jesus. But Jesus, set his face to go there anyway. He wasn’t going to give up. His cross was waiting there for him, and that was the reason his heavenly father sent him. There he would take up his cross and be glorified, and his death would be for the life of the world. Jesus set his face toward Jerusalem. He wasn’t going to give up…but neither was the devil.

That motivational slogan "never give up" it goes both ways. If a child is having trouble with his homework and wants to throw in the towel, "don't give up" is good advice. But what about when a child trying to talk his parents into letting him stay up late, or to extend his curfew past reasonable hours. What about when you're at the store, and he’s been told five times already, “no, we’re not buying you that, so stop asking." I wonder, does he think, “Never give up”, if at first you don’t succeed try and try again. Where does steadfastness and stick-to-itiveness become stubbornness and insisting on your own way?

Friends, it’s not only our Lord and savior who dug in his heels, is resolved and never gives up. Satan has the same determination. Last week, we heard how Jesus was in the wilderness for forty days and forty nights being tempted by the devil. Satan tried to get Jesus to deny his cross and to save himself. He tried to talk Jesus into avoiding the suffering and shame of his cross-shaped ministry and instead to glorify himself without it. It was a temptation, and Jesus overcame it. And at the end the lesson said, “**And when the devil had ended every temptation, he departed from Jesus until an opportune time**.”

Jesus is not the only one with resolve. Satan is determined to hinder God’s plan of salvation wherever he finds it, and he will never give up until he's finally cast into the lake of fire once and for all. He is always looking for a foothold, an opportune time to tempt God’s children away from him. Wouldn't it be nice if the devil would just give up; give in? Instead he is persistent as a mosquito. And be on your guard, because he’s crafty. He’s an opportunist. He’ll use whatever resources are at his disposal to tempt you to deny your cross and your calling. For Jesus was not only tempted in the wilderness; Satan was attacking him throughout his ministry.

Our Gospel reads, “**At that very hour some Pharisees came and said to Jesus, “Get away from here, for Herod wants to kill you**.” And at first you might think this odd, because the Pharisees are Jesus enemies. They are the ones who are opposed to him, because he criticizes them and their human traditions. They try and entrap Jesus with his words and accuse him of having a demon. They even plotted to kill Jesus (Matthew 12:14).

So why now are they warning him to go away because his life is in danger? Do they have a sudden compassion for Jesus. Do they want to spare him suffering and save him from Herod. If they want him dead, they ought to let him walk right into Herod’s clutches. Instead they warn him to get away. They must really love Jesus and be concerned for his safety, right?

At one point, when Jesus tells his disciples he must suffer many things and die, the apostle Peter says, “**Far be it from you, Lord**.” And Jesus says to Peter, “**Get behind me Satan**.” He calls Peter Satan, not because he is Satan, but because Satan is always at work, even in Jesus own disciple in order to keep him from going to the cross. So too, when the Pharisees say "**Run away Jesus, Herod wants to kill you**." It is Satan at work in the unfaithfulness of the Pharisees. This is another “opportune time” to tempt Jesus to turn away from Jerusalem, to not go to the cross. Jesus knows full well what awaits him in Jerusalem…agony and death at the hands of his own people.

And you wouldn't think it would take much to talk somebody out of a cross. And Jesus' cross was more than intersecting planks of wood. His cross was nakedness and humiliation; persecution and pain and more than that, the very wrath of God himself is to be poured out upon him...the torture of hell itself. Jesus says a chapter earlier, “**I have a baptism to be baptized with, and how great is my distress until it is accomplished.**” When he says this, he had already been baptized in the Jordan River and receives the Holy Spirit. The baptism he’s talking about is having the wrath of God poured out upon him; and he says he is in great distress until it happens.

This ought to make our hearts wrench with guilt and shame. We grumble over the little crosses we bear; the people we have to put up with. So Satan is at work in the world to tempt us away from our crosses; and we are so weak with sin, we take the bait. **Marriage is a cross; so the world has made Divorce is an acceptable way to solve marriage problems**; unwanted pregnancy is a cross, so Satan says "just get an abortion" it's your body after all. And the newest socially acceptable way to deny our cross, "gender dysphoria." If a gender confused man feels more like a woman, why should he have to bear the cross of a gender he's not comfortable with? And so he grumbles until the whole world accommodates his feelings because, heaven forbid, he bear his cross and face it daily.

And when conflict happens in the church, we would rather just walk away than work through the grueling process of reconciliation. And yet, **Christ faced the cross of hell and went to it without complaint**. Hebrews 12:2 says, “**but for the joy that was set before him, Jesus endured the cross, despising the shame, and is seated at the right hand of the throne of God.**” We are constantly looking for escape clauses and excuses to deny our crosses, and we should be ashamed. Because for Christ, facing his cross was a labour of love, because he did it for you.

To the world, the loving thing to do would be for Jesus to get a clue. He knew that the religious leaders didn’t want him there...the Pharisees, the chief priests and the scribes. **If he shows his face in Jerusalem, it will be interpreted as an act of aggression.** Why push their buttons? Why poke the bear? He's just asking for a cross. He's just being stubborn.

Galatians 6:9 says, "**An let us not grow weary of doing good, for in due season we will reap, if we do not give up**." And that’s today’s gospel, that Jesus’ didn't give up. His love for us is so strong and so forceful that it compelled him to set his face towards Jerusalem and the cross that awaited him there. He went forth without complaint, without hatred, without a chip on his shoulder as we surely would. He walks straight into Jerusalem, where he’s not wanted, because it was the loving thing to do.

Parents, you sacrifice and you do all you can for your children who, often enough would rather you just go away, leave them alone. You set a curfew, discipline them, not to make their life miserable, but because you love them. But you get no thanks for it. How fitting is it then that Jesus considers himself our father hen. He says, “**How often would I have gathered your children together as a hen gathers her brood under her wings, and you were not willing!**" (Luke 13:35). But Christ was willing to save, and he is willing still. He send his own life giving flesh and blood for you to eat and to drink, so sustain you in the faith, to give you his holy spirit, that you may never weary in doing good, but by faith grasp the good that christ has done for you on his cross.