

God's Immutable Loving Plan
Luke 13:31-33

As we begin our study today of these precious words of Luke chapter 13, I'm reminded of all the many, many times I have heard the beloved evangelist Billy Graham say the words, "God loves you and He has a plan for your life". I believe that he said those words in most every sermon that I heard him preach.

And God really does love you and me! And He really does have a plan for our lives, for your life and for my life, and for every other person who receives His blessed salvation.

And as Jesus tells us here in this passage that I'll read for us in a moment, nothing would be able to delay or prevent Him from doing everything that it would take to bring about the fulfillment of that plan, not men and especially not the wiles of the demonic forces of the devil.

Isaiah in prophesying about these moments in the Lord Jesus' journey said that His face was "set like flint" towards completing His purpose and His plan.

And oh dear Christian, the purpose behind this plan is a profound one, the one given to us in one of our most favorite of verses in these scriptures, John 3:16.

16 For God so loved the world that He gave His only begotten Son, that whoever believes in Him should not perish but have everlasting life. (John 3:16)

Simple words, but so profound in their meaning and purpose. And God is doing it all simply because He loves us.

And if we'll be faithful to do our part and to read and to study the truths given to us in these scriptures each day, then the Holy Spirit will be faithful to reveal God's heart of love to us.

And please, please do understand that a diligent study of these truths is so important and so very necessary. That's because God's revelation of Himself is much like a painting that's being painted by a great artist. We must not just view a few brush strokes and then walk away. If we do that we will not be able to know what the final painting will look like.

We need to return to the painting each day and look carefully at the next brushstrokes and the next and the next. And each time that we do, we'll know more and more of who our blessed Savior really is and more and more about His blessed plan for us, both for now in these present days and also for that vast eternity that lays ahead of us.

And yes, as we study through these scriptures each week, we do often repeat some, or many of the truths that we have studied on other occasions. But that is the teaching method of our Lord. He knows that if we are to gain a more full and clearer revelation of who He is, it will be necessary for us to understand His truths from many different contexts. And by our doing it that way, His words, His truths will take on meaning that will become Spirit and Life within our needful souls.

Folks, Jesus did it that way with His disciples. And if you and I will be faithful to follow along closely with Him as His disciples did, then He'll do the same with you and me.

And so it is then with this passage that's before us today. These are words that have been said to us in these scriptures many times over and in many different ways. And as we listen carefully to the words of this passage, we'll hear the Holy Spirit saying to us, once again, that our God really does love us, and that He has a plan, an immutable plan, a plan that can neither be changed, nor diverted, nor thwarted by men nor demons, a plan that was put into place before the foundations of the world, a plan that Christ Himself is carrying forward, a plan to bring salvation into the souls of the men and women who will receive Him, past, present and future, and especially, to you and me.

And folks, though these words before us today may seem cloaked within a circumstance that's taking place at that one moment in time, the words not only reveal God's plan, they also reveal some of the carefully defined timetable that He was following that could not be altered.

Listen carefully to these precious words given to us in Luke chapter 13, beginning with verse 31,

³¹On that very day some Pharisees came, saying to Him, "Get out and depart from here, for Herod wants to kill You."

³²And He said to them, "Go, tell that fox, 'Behold, I cast out demons and perform cures today and tomorrow, and the third day I shall be

perfected.' ³³Nevertheless I must journey today, tomorrow, and the day following; for it cannot be that a prophet should perish outside of Jerusalem.

³⁴"O Jerusalem, Jerusalem, the one who kills the prophets and stones those who are sent to her! How often I wanted to gather your children together, as a hen gathers her brood under her wings, but you were not willing! ³⁵See! Your house is left to you desolate; and assuredly, I say to you, you shall not see Me until the time comes when you say, 'Blessed is He who comes in the name of the Lord!'" (Luke 13:31-35)

These words give a simple step-by-step timetable of the few remaining days that Jesus would minister here on the earth. And these steps, and this timetable would be immutable, unchangeable, uninteruptable.

And here also, He is defiantly telling these Pharisees that He will do exactly as He has planned and that no one could turn Him away from His appointed mission and purpose. His words again,

'Behold, I cast out demons and perform cures today and tomorrow, and the third *day* I shall be perfected.' ³³Nevertheless I must journey today, tomorrow, and the *day* following; for it cannot be that a prophet should perish outside of Jerusalem. (Luke 13:32-33)

Jesus knew all of the things that He was appointed to accomplish each and every day. And while some who read these words might get caught up in and confused by the actual number of days Jesus is speaking about, His plan still remains pure and simple.

For the immediate days that He was in, and for the soon coming days that would follow, He would resolutely continue His plan of giving the saving gospel to anyone who would receive it. And He would continue with His defeat of the demonic world, driving them out from the souls of men, women and children. And He would heal many who suffered from diseases.

And He would continue to heal and to cast out demons as He would make His way towards Jerusalem, that divinely chosen place where He, the Christ, the Messiah, would suffer and die. And then on a "third day", both He and His plan for the souls of mankind would be accomplished and "perfected".

His plan was a carefully laid plan, one that had come out from the heart of God even before the first foundations of the world had been laid, a plan filled with a kind of love and a depth of love that mankind will never fathom, a love that sacrifices everything so that the souls of men might be saved, a plan that leaves nothing undone.

And here, God opens His heart wide so that, we who have eyes to see and ears to hear, might grasp at least some measure of His deep, abiding, passionate love for us. He speaks here of how His heart “yearns” to gather the people of Jerusalem of that day, and also you and me of our day, up close to Him as a mother hen would gather her chicks up under her protective wings.

Listen to these words! This is the very heart of God crying out to His children, Israel, and also crying out to you and to me right at this moment! Verse 34,
³⁴ . . . How often I wanted to gather your children together, as a hen gathers her brood under her wings, but you were not willing! (Luke 13:34)

These words remind me of a circumstance where a camera was monitoring a chicken yard when a mother hen quickly gathered her little ones under her wings and she hovered down over them to protect them just as a hawk swooped down several times attacking the mother hen and trying to get her to run exposing her baby chicks to allow the hawk to capture one of them. But the mother hen was faithful, weathering the attacks by the hawk and protecting her precious brood.

God wants to do the same for you and for me if we will only let Him.

How often have we as parents and grandparents wanted to hug our beloved children up close to us to comfort them, especially in their times of struggle and of suffering. But just as with the children there in Jerusalem, too often, our children and our grandchildren will have none of it.

Even as little ones, our children often need only a quick reminder that they are loved and then they squirm to get away and to get on about the things they want to do.

And later on, in their adult years, when those trials and difficulties take on a more serious and painful note, and we reach to hold them and to comfort them, even then, they will not have any of it. Their lives have become too busy,

too consumed with the things of the day to allow us time to hold them and to bless them. And they quickly go their way.

And that seems especially to be so when we try to tell them about really important things, about things like salvation and about eternity. They quickly pull away, and too often, they even stay away.

And no, our children might not go so far as to kill us as these scriptures tell us the Jews did to their prophets, but they do nearly the same. I die a little each day as I watch my children and grandchildren pull further and further away from the arms of the God who loves them . . . and also away from me.

And it's especially heartbreaking for me to know that their rejection is really not so much of me as it is of God. Our Lord tells us that in 1 Samuel chapter 8. There He tells us,

⁷ . . . they have not rejected you, but they have rejected Me, that I should not reign over them. (1 Samuel 8:7)

And then in another place, Jesus said,

¹⁶ He who hears you hears Me, he who rejects you rejects Me, and he who rejects Me rejects Him who sent Me." (Luke 10:16)

And then here, Jesus said about His beloved children, Israel,

³⁴ . . . How often I wanted to gather your children together, as a hen gathers her brood under her wings, but you were not willing! (Luke 13:34)

These words of God are intimate and they are personal. They are words that call out for us to come to Him and to surrender ourselves into a deep and loving relationship with Him.

Too often, it seems that people see God as someone who is distant and even fearsome and harsh. But He is not. He is a loving Father who deeply desires to draw us up close to Him, to hide us under the protective covering of His wings. And what a loving and gentle and protected place that would be for us to live during these days of such turbulence and heartbreak!

That was God's Plan then, and it still is now. And God repeats it to us in these words as Jesus journeyed His way towards Jerusalem, and towards the cross.

And as He said in another place, if we will only have ears to listen, we will, within these scriptures, hear His Plan and His words of purpose.

And again, we must understand that His plan is absolute, a plan that cannot be altered or changed.

We, with our modern day theology, often struggle to remember that God really does do such absolute and immutable things.

We insist so strongly upon “free will” being the controlling factor in all the things that take place. And “free will” really does seem to win out in so many circumstances, but folks, not in all circumstances . . . not all of them!

There are some plans and some purposes, like these spoken about here in these words of scripture that cannot be altered by man's “free will.” That was clear as Jesus rejected the efforts of these Pharisees who tried to get Him to change His plans and efforts and to leave.

Dear Christian, contrary to the belief of so many of the misguided teachings of some of the preachers and teachers of our day, insisting that “God will never violate our free will”, we must understand and accept that our God is ever and always absolutely sovereign, “absolutely” sovereign.

And within His omniscient and omnipotent sovereign reign over all that takes place here on this earth, there will be more times than we can imagine that He simply will overrule the “free will” of men and then insert His own absolute plan into the equation and make all things to take place in accordance with His divine will. And He was doing exactly that as He journeyed towards Jerusalem and on to His crucifixion.

Let me take a moment and repeat what I have been saying, because it bears being said over and over again. God really does have a “plan”, and it is an immutable, unchangeable plan that will not be altered. And Jesus gave us these words so that you and I can know for certain that that is so.

These words again in verse 33,

³³ Nevertheless, I must go on my way today and tomorrow and the day following, for it cannot be that a prophet should perish away from Jerusalem.’ (Luke 13:33)

That word “nevertheless” carries with it the sense that Jesus is saying, “ I know what you Pharisees and that fox Herod and the whole demonic kingdom is trying to do. And I know all those things that are to take place in the days that lay ahead of me, even the awful suffering and death that I must face ahead of me, but . . . nevertheless . . . nevertheless, even though I know all of that, I will, I must press on and complete my course.”

And Jesus is saying, “Go tell all of those ‘foxes’ that are set on changing my course that I do not fear any of them.” I know why I have come down to this earth, to seek and to save those who are lost. And I know that I must die to do it, and that my death is nearly at hand.

And yes, I know that Herod will take his part in my dying. None of this will be a surprise to me because this plan has been set into place for a long, long time, even before the foundations of this earth were laid. And there in the Trinity, I was very much a part of the making of that plan.

And when I am “perfected”, all things will be set aright. Through the thing that I will do, men and women everywhere will, once again, be able to stand firm against the wiles of the evil one. Righteousness will once again be able to prevail within the hearts and lives of men and women.

And I know that neither that fox Herod, nor anyone else can kill me before the appointed time of my work is complete.

And so, in spite of these threats, I will continue along my path today and tomorrow. And I will cast out demons and I will heal the sick. And there is no power on the earth that can hinder my progress.

There is a certain day ahead of me, a day that I know everything about, a day appointed before even the first foundation stones of the earth were laid, a special day in which I will atone for all of the sins of the world. Sin will be wiped away from men’s hearts and righteousness will once again reign.

And none of that can take place at any time or in any place other than as it has been appointed and decreed. It will be on a certain day, that day of Passover, and in that certain city, Jerusalem. That is the Plan that God the Father and God the Holy Spirit and I, The Son, have agreed upon. And so it shall be! Amen and Amen! And until then,

'Behold, I cast out demons and perform cures today and tomorrow, and the third day I finish my course.

³³ Nevertheless, I must go on my way today and tomorrow and the day following, for it cannot be that a prophet should perish away from Jerusalem.' (Luke 13:32-33)

Now then, for you and me as we read and as we hear these precious words, what must you and I do with what we now know? Shall we continue to naively make our own plans for each day and then get on about them without any consideration for the plans that God might have for our day. Shall we continue to naively and blindly exercise our free will and to struggle to free ourselves from the "protective covering of His wings", and to hurry on about life as we want it to be?

Dear Christian, may I instead plead with us to consider that God really does have a plan and a call upon the timetable and the steps, and the events that lie ahead of you and me during each of the remaining days ahead of us.

And yes, there is a "nevertheless" that also will apply to you and to me, a "nevertheless" that assures us that as the plan that God has for us takes place, some of those plans will be very pleasing and pleasant, but others of them will be difficult and even painful, events that if we are unprepared for them will catch us by surprise.

And that is the answer to the question that I just asked, "What must you and I do with these words that we have received here today?"

Our response must be that as we awaken each morning we willingly surrender our hearts afresh to him, knowing that whatever His plan will bring to us that day will be a loving plan, a plan that will surely carry us on into an eternity of His mercy and grace.

I'll close with these blessed words of encouragement given to us in Proverbs chapter 3,

⁵ Trust in the LORD with all your heart, And lean not on your own understanding; ⁶ In all your ways acknowledge Him, And He shall direct your paths. (Proverbs 3:5-6)

Let's pray.

