Second Sunday in Lent, Gospel, Year C

WE KNOCKED THE JAR OVER

Luke 13:31-35
Second Sunday in Lent
Analysis by Timothy Hoyer

31 At that very hour some Pharisees came and said to him, “Get away from here, for Herod wants to kill you.” 32 He said to them, “Go and tell that fox for me, ‘Listen, I am casting out demons and performing cures today and tomorrow, and on the third day I finish my work. 33 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.’ 34 Jerusalem, Jerusalem, the city that kills the prophets and stones those who are sent to it! How often have I desired to gather your children together as a hen gathers her brood under her wings, and you were not willing! 35 See, your house is left to you. And I tell you, you will not see me until the time comes when you say, ‘Blessed is the one who comes in the name of the Lord.’”

DIAGNOSIS: The Scattered Won’t Be Gathered

Step 1: Initial Diagnosis (External Problem): The Jar of Human “Beans” Got Spilt

People are like spilled, raw beans, scattered across the floor. People like it there on the floor, no longer constrained by a jar. They can move around, go where they want, do what they desire, and if some get stepped on by dangers or accidents, it gets explained away by saying, “It was meant to be. It was bad luck. They should have been more careful. It was their time.” (Those explanations are religious beliefs.) If some get hurt by other beans, then, “Life is tough, bad things happen, stay away from those kinds of people.” (Again, more religions—ways to make sense out of what happens in life.) The keeper of the beans wants to gather the beans back together, back into the jar where they are safe. Jesus has been sent to do the gathering, and does so by casting out demons and performing cures, showing how he is like a mother hen clucking to gather her brood under her wings.

Step 2: Advanced Diagnosis (Internal Problem): The Beans Are Not Willing

But the beans are not willing. This life has to be managed. Food has to be earned, grown, gathered, found, rummaged for, begged for, or gone without. That managing of life takes time, it takes effort, planning, asking friends for rides or where to find the best place to rummage. We look for fun, we look for things that make us feel good. We do not want to expend what minutes we have focusing on the meaning and purpose of our lives, as in having a relationship with the God who created us or a God described to us as one who demands obedience to rules (while we yet demand everyone else obey the rules and then we judge their performance everyday). And those who have power (wealth) will not let some mangy, mob-influencing vagabond threaten their source of money, nor will they let some poor, traveling preacher's popularity poison the hearts of their source of opulence. Nobody wants anybody to take away what belongs to them. So we kill the prophets and stone those who are sent to tell us about God.

Step 3: Final Diagnosis (Eternal Problem): Death Does Its Work

Odd how we take the death that endangers us all and use it to threaten others. King Herod certainly believed he could use death to get what he wanted. He did not realize that by setting that standard others could do the same thing and use death as their tool to achieve their purpose. Those others include God. Death is God's tool of judgment against those who are unwilling to live under God's way of love and care and sacrifice. Sure, we have our home, our house, the place we live, but that is all, and it is no protection against those accidents or the passing of time or the sickness that takes away our breath.

PROGNOSIS: The Scattered Get Died For

Step 4: Initial Prognosis (Eternal Solution): Jesus Does His Work

Then Jesus places himself among those whom God has sent—"It is impossible for a prophet to be killed outside of Jerusalem." Jesus then describes his work as continuing on today, tomorrow, and that he finishes on the third day, thus telling us that his death and then his rising on the third day are his work, not his demise or failure. Others may demand he be crucified, they may want to kill him, but his work is to deal with death, and to deal with the accusation of "You are spilt beans!" Jesus also had to deal with the judgment and condemnation that exists in all we say and do. The people who crucified Jesus thought that either Jesus' time had come, or life is tough, or God was against him, or he got what he deserved. But on the cross Jesus was doing his work, and he finished it on the third day by rising from the dead. Death is no longer the greatest and last enemy. It has been overcome by Jesus. But there is more to Jesus' work, and that is that he will get us through death, he will raise us from death, to live with him forever. He will cast out death and perform his cure of our unwilling hearts. And he will deal with judgment by giving us mercy instead.

Step 5: Advanced Prognosis (Internal Solution): A New Willing Is

Given

Jesus’ cure for our unwilling hearts is to give us trust in him, to trust him as our religion, our meaning or purpose or spirituality. He becomes the one whom we use to frame our lives, to explain our lives. He becomes the way we live and how we live and why we live. His way is not about accident or luck or fate or survival. His way is mercy, grace, peace, the granting to us of his goodness, the very goodness of God, and filling us with his goodness

Step 6: Final Prognosis (External Solution): The Beans Get Gathered into a New Place

Filled with Jesus’ goodness, we can then do his goodness to each other by being merciful, being patient, giving peace, forgiving, and not judging or accusing or demanding. We are gathered under his wings of mercy. We are gathered weekly under the wings called the church, where together we are told of Jesus’ work for us, and where mercy is give to us, where we encourage each other to trust Jesus. We may run out from under his wings, but we are always gathered back in. So as we as human “beans” roll across the floor, as we deal with accidents and hate and meanness and the need to eat, we can insert into those lives fraught with fear, with the burden to fulfill the demands of life, we can insert a bit of love, a bit of mercy, and gift of peace, so that we help Jesus place his wings over them and gather them into his care.