

Read: Luke 13:31-33

No Shortcuts

Luke 13:31-33

At that time some Pharisees came to Jesus and said to him, "Leave this place and go somewhere else. Herod wants to kill you." He replied, "Go tell that fox, 'I will keep on driving out demons and healing people today and tomorrow, and on the third day I will reach my goal.' In any case, I must press on today and tomorrow and the next day—for surely no prophet can die outside Jerusalem!"

In the name of the Father and of the Son and of the Holy Spirit. Amen.

There is a saying about shortcuts that goes, "shortcuts aren't always." It means this: that sometimes we think we are saving time by taking a shortcut, but it doesn't always end up that way. Ask a child who decided to shove everything under their bed when told to clean their room. Once their parents discovered the "shortcut," not only did they have to finish cleaning their room, they also had to clean the bathroom and the dishes. What seemed like a shortcut wasn't one at all.

In our reading for today, Jesus was teaching and preaching in an area ruled by Herod Antipas. While he was there, some Pharisees told Jesus that Herod wanted to kill him and that he should leave the area. Whether they knew it or not, the Pharisees were offering Jesus a shortcut to avoid his mission of traveling to Jerusalem to suffer and die for the sins of all people.

It is hard to even think about, but can you imagine if Jesus accepted their offer of a shortcut? It would have been devastating for us. Due to our sinful nature, we have no way to save ourselves. On our own we have no hope for the future, and our path through this life here on earth could end only in eternal destruction.

Praise be to God that Jesus in his perfect determination didn't even flinch. He knew there was no shortcut to the painful path he was on, so he pressed on. While the road to his death would not be easy, he knew his journey wouldn't end on the cross. Three days later he would reach his goal by rising from the dead and winning for us the eternal victory over sin, death, and the devil.

All this Jesus did for us not because we have earned or deserved it, but because of his amazing love for us. Even more, he has worked in our hearts the gift of faith so that we may receive the blessings of the forgiveness of sins and eternal life with him in heaven.

As we journey with Jesus to the cross during this season of Lent, we can't help but be sad that it was our sins that caused him to suffer and die. At the same time, we can't help but marvel at his willingness to avoid any shortcuts to rescue us!

The questions below are to help families discuss this devotion. The questions are divided by age group as suggestions, but anyone could reflect on any of the questions as they desire.

Questions for the Younger Children

- How are the naughty things we do a “shortcut”?
- How did Jesus save you from your sins?

Questions for Elementary Age Children

- Why was Jesus willing to suffer and die on the cross for you?
- How can you show your gratitude to Jesus for his amazing love?

Questions for Middle School and Above

- Think of a time you tried to take a shortcut and it didn't work out like you planned.
- Why was it so important that Jesus never took a shortcut in his plan to save us?

Closing Prayer:

Dear Savior, what wondrous love you showed us by taking the long and hard journey to the cross. We thank you for your willingness to avoid any shortcuts, so that through the gift of faith, we might live with you forever in heaven. Amen.