



**Potomac Hills**  
Community Church, PCA  
RELEVANT • RELATIONAL • REAL

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## **What Jesus said about God's Purposes** **"Revealed Grace" - a series from Luke** **Luke 13:31-35**

### **INTRODUCTION: "*Flee for your lives!*"<sup>1</sup>**

Stephen Arterburn, the founder of the New Life Clinics, tells the story of living in Laguna Beach, California in October of 1993.

A firestorm was ripping through the beautiful hills of Laguna Beach, destroying more than 200 homes on the north side of town. People just watched the fire burn, getting closer and closer to the town. Stephen and his wife Sandy watched in total silence, both awed and fearful of the sight.

The home they had established ten years earlier was in the path of the fire and so they began to load their belongings into their two cars and a friend's pickup.

As they watched the fire slowly creep toward their street, they were running out of both space and time and had to make some critical decisions about what to keep and what to leave and what was really valuable.

They were surprised at how little they really cared about. The first thing Stephen loaded was his collection of ukuleles. Having fought depression for most of his life, he had learned a valuable lesson: it is almost impossible to be depressed while playing a ukulele. Sandy took the family photo albums and videos of them.

Ukuleles, photographs, videos, and the three of them – Stephen, Sandy, and their 2-year-old daughter Madeline. What else really mattered?

After they packed up, Stephen climbed on top of the house and began to douse the roof with water ... as he looked down the street, he could see some of the other houses starting to burn.

Just then, the police arrived, bullhorns blaring. "The fires are burning on this street! You must abandon your homes! Flee for your lives, or you might not be able to."

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<sup>1</sup> The introduction is adapted from [The God of Second Chances](#) by Stephen Arterburn, pages 92-95.

The whole town was being evacuated.

So he climbed back down and rushed for the front door. And as he was leaving, out of the corner of his eye, he saw a small shiny green froggy purse – his daughter Madeline’s prize possession. It was worth maybe \$2.50. On impulse he grabbed the purse, locked the door and ran to the car.

They decided to rendezvous at McDonald’s in the next town, and as they were driving, Madeline looked up at her father, who, understandably was stricken with grief thinking about almost all of their worldly possessions going up in smoke, and in her little-girl way, asked, “Daddy, house burn down?”

“Madeline,” he replied, “We don’t know if it burned down. We won’t know for a couple of days.”

“Daddy,” she whispered. “Forgot my froggy purse.”

He reached down and his hand found that cheap piece of shiny green vinyl. He handed it to her and became an instant hero.

A huge grin covered her face and she hugged his arm and said, “Thank you, Daddy.”

At that moment, Stephen Arterburn says he wouldn’t have taken \$20,000 for that ridiculous purse.

Fortunately for them, Madeline’s purse wasn’t the only thing that survived. The entire house was spared. Just after they left, the fire department decided if they didn’t stop the fire right there, they would lose the whole town. They made a courageous stand and stopped the progress of the fire ten houses away.

Have you ever been in a situation where you were told to flee for your lives? Has anyone ever told you that if you didn’t leave, move on, change, get going ... you weren’t going to make it?

Maybe it was a threat of fire?

Maybe it was a threat from someone else?

Maybe nothing like that has ever happened to you?

But if it does, you can be assured that Jesus knows what you’re facing ... because in today’s passage, Luke 13:31-35, Jesus faces just such a scenario.

Listen to what it says ...

**Luke 13:31-35**, “A few minutes later some Pharisees said to Him, “Get out of here if you want to live, because Herod Antipas wants to kill you!”

[32] Jesus replied, “Go tell that fox that I will keep on casting out demons and doing miracles of healing today and tomorrow; and **the third day I will accomplish My purpose**. [33] Yes, today, tomorrow, and the next day I must proceed on My way. For it wouldn’t do for a prophet of God to be killed except in Jerusalem!

[34] “O Jerusalem, Jerusalem, the city that kills the prophets and stones God’s

*messengers! How often I have wanted to gather your children together as a hen protects her chicks beneath her wings, but you wouldn't let Me. [35] And now look, your house is left to you empty. And you will never see Me again until you say, 'Bless the one who comes in the name of the Lord!' ""*

Let's start at the beginning with ...

### **v. 31-33: JESUS' MESSAGE TO HIS ENEMIES <sup>2</sup>**

Luke leaves us in no doubt about the Pharisee's dislike for Jesus. His pronouncement of woes on the Pharisee's resulted in their hatred of Him. So much so that the text says, **Luke 11:53-54**, "*As Jesus finished speaking, the Pharisees and teachers of religious law were furious. From that time on they grilled Him with many hostile questions, trying to trap Him into saying something they could use against Him.*"

So when some Pharisees come to Jesus with what appears to be friendly advice, "*Get out of here if you want to live, because Herod Antipas wants to kill you!*" Jesus is not fooled. Even though He was the Lamb of God, even lambs are suspicious of wolves when they feign concern for their safety.

Jesus knew that the Pharisees and Herod were in collusion to threaten Jesus, hoping He would leave and go south into Judea. If He did that, then He wouldn't be Herod's problem anymore and the Pharisees were much more powerful in Judea and they would be able to take action against Jesus easier. So getting Jesus to move was advantageous to both.

But Jesus sees through their trap and crafts parallel answers to them both.

To Herod, He tells them, verse 32, "*Go tell that fox that I will keep on casting out demons and doing miracles of healing today and tomorrow; and **the third day I will accomplish My purpose.***"

"Fox" was a common Hebrew term to describe an untrustworthy, cunning, but low person who is considered to be insignificant and worthless. It's an expression of utter contempt. Significantly, Herod is the only individual person whom Jesus is recorded as treating with contempt. Later, when He had to appear before Herod, He remained silent, again showing contempt for Him. And when Jesus doesn't have anything to say to you, you're in rough shape.

So He tells them that He's going to do His normal ministry of casting out demons and doing miracles and healing according to His own pace, and His own schedule, where He chooses to, until He's finished. He wasn't going to be manipulated by Herod.

Now in the wider context of Luke, this is also referring to Jesus' death and resurrection as being under divine sovereignty. The eternal King, Jesus, has

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<sup>2</sup> Exposition is adapted from Preaching the Word: Luke, volume two by R. Kent Hughes, pages 103-108.

addressed the temporal king, Herod, with confidence in His own sovereignty.

Herod wasn't going to do anything to Jesus that wasn't already in the sovereign plan of God. As Jesus said in **John 10:18**, "*No one can take My life from Me. I lay down My life voluntarily. For **I have the right to lay it down when I want to** and also the power to take it again. For My Father has given Me this command.*"

Later Luke writes in **Acts 2:23**, "*This man was handed over to you **by God's set purpose and foreknowledge**; and you, with the help of wicked men, put Him to death by nailing Him to the cross.*" (NIV)

And then again in **Acts 2:36**, "*So let it be clearly known by everyone in Israel that God has made this Jesus whom you crucified to be both Lord and Messiah!*"

Having aggressively sent a message to Herod, Jesus turns to the Pharisees and with scathing irony says, verse 33, "*Yes, today, tomorrow, and the next day I must proceed on My way. For it wouldn't do for a prophet of God to be killed except in Jerusalem!*"

In essence, Jesus says, "Since Jerusalem has a monopoly on killing prophets, on this highest occasion the city won't be deprived."

That's where Zechariah was killed in 2 Chronicles 24:20-22.

That's where the prophet Uriah was killed by King Jehoikim in Jeremiah 26:20-23.

And that's where Jeremiah was killed by King Zedekiah in Jeremiah 38:4-6.

If Herod, or anyone else, wanted to kill Jesus, he had better make plans to go to Jerusalem – because there, and only there, would He die.

This adds quite a bit to our understanding of Jesus. Under most circumstances it would be considered cruel and unusual punishment to a condemned criminal to daily be moved a little bit closer to the place of execution.

But this is Jesus' daily experience as He deliberately chooses to go to Jerusalem. He knows He is going to be crucified, dead, and buried. He knows it is going to be both terrible and terrifying.

And so why does He keep going in this direction?

Because He says, "*and **the third day I will accomplish My purpose.***"

He knows that His purpose involves dying in Jerusalem.

He knows that His purpose is exceedingly difficult and excruciatingly painful.

In **Matthew 20:22**, when the disciples ask to sit at His right hand, it says, "*But Jesus told them, "You don't know what you are asking! **Are you able to drink from the bitter cup of sorrow I am about to drink?***"

And in **Matthew 26:39**, we read, "*He went on a little farther and fell face*

*down on the ground, praying, "My Father! If it is possible, let this cup of suffering be taken away from me. Yet I want your will, not mine.""*

He calls it this cup of sorrow, this cup of suffering; you might say, *"this cup is the new covenant in My blood, shed for many for the remission of sins."*

The prophet Isaiah said, **Isaiah 53:3-5**, *"He was despised and rejected—a man of sorrows, acquainted with bitterest grief. We turned our backs on Him and looked the other way when He went by. He was despised, and we did not care. [4] Yet it was our weaknesses He carried; it was our sorrows that weighed Him down. And we thought His troubles were a punishment from God for His own sins! [5] But He was wounded and crushed for our sins. He was beaten that we might have peace. He was whipped, and we were healed!"*

Jesus knew His purpose, He knew His Father's will, and neither Herod nor the Pharisees are able to short-circuit God's plans ... however bitter, however sorrowful, how painful, how difficult they may be.

Knowing that He is going to Jerusalem, Jesus continues ...

#### **v. 34-35: JESUS' MESSAGE TO HIS PEOPLE**

Jesus goes on to lament this terrible thing that has overcome the holy city of Jerusalem. Jerusalem means city of peace, but it has become a city of death. And Jesus has this heartfelt cry, verse 34, *"O Jerusalem, Jerusalem, the city that kills the prophets and stones God's messengers! How often I have wanted to gather your children together as a hen protects her chicks beneath her wings, but you wouldn't let Me."*

Jesus expresses His desire for His people with this image of a mother bird protecting her young. This same type of image is used in the Old Testament to describe the love of God for His people then.

**Deuteronomy 32:10-11**, *"He found them in a desert land, in an empty, howling wasteland. He surrounded them and watched over them; He guarded them as His most precious possession. [11] Like an eagle that rouses her chicks and hovers over her young, so He spread his wings to take them in and carried them aloft on His pinions."*

Six times in the Psalms, it mentions finding shelter and protection in the shadow of His wings. Under the protection of God, one finds ultimate security. It's not just a sentimental image, but powerful metaphor to convey Christ's longing for His people to come to Him.

So much so that when He finally reaches Jerusalem, His first reaction is to weep. **Luke 19:41-42** says, *"But as they came closer to Jerusalem and Jesus saw the city ahead, He began to cry. [42] "I wish that even today you would find the way of peace. But now it is too late, and peace is hidden from you."*

His people don't come to Him and that grieves Him deeply. And so this

passage finishes with this famous prophecy given by Christ concerning Jerusalem. *“And now look, your house is left to you empty.”* The NIV says, “desolate.”

And it came to pass. In 70 AD, Jerusalem was destroyed by the Romans. It was starved into submission. So many died, and since they couldn't be buried within the walls of the city, the bodies were flung over the wall. Eventually the Romans crucified hundreds, killed thousands, and destroyed the city so thoroughly that the only thing left of the Temple was a part of the retaining wall we know today as the Western Wall, or the Wailing Wall.

And Jerusalem hasn't known peace since, right up to today.

**Psalm 122:6** says, *“Pray for the peace of Jerusalem. May all who love this city prosper.”*

And then Jesus says, *“And you will never see Me again until you say, 'Bless the one who comes in the name of the Lord!' ”*

Christ's verdict is not one of eternal judgment. These words signal His triumphal entry. First into Jerusalem on what we know as Palm Sunday (which is next week). But they also signal His triumphal entry at the Second Coming when, according to **Philippians 2:10-11**, *“so that at the name of Jesus every knee will bow, in heaven and on earth and under the earth, [11] and every tongue will confess that Jesus Christ is Lord, to the glory of God the Father.”*

I want to take some time to look at a particular application of this incident and draw upon some other times in Jesus' life that demonstrate these same realities. In this passage we have seen Jesus' teaching, His wisdom, His counsel expressed both in anger and sorrow.

And I want to look closer at ...

### **APPLICATION: JESUS' COUNSEL** <sup>3</sup>

There is another incident in Jesus' life when He responds with both anger and sorrow, rage and weeping. We find it in John 11; it is the famous passage where Jesus is at the tomb of Lazarus.

**John 11:17-43**, *“When Jesus arrived at Bethany, he was told that Lazarus had already been in his grave for four days. [18] Bethany was only a few miles down the road from Jerusalem, [19] and many of the people had come to pay their respects and console Martha and Mary on their loss. [20] When Martha got word that Jesus was coming, she went to meet Him. But Mary stayed at home. [21] Martha said to Jesus, “**Lord, if You had been here, my brother would not have died.** [22] But even now I know that God will give You whatever you ask.”*

*[23] Jesus told her, “Your brother will rise again.”*

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<sup>3</sup> The application has been adapted from the sermon, “Truth, Tears, Anger, and Grace” by Tim Keller, Redeemer Presbyterian Church, New York City, September 16, 2001 as printed in *The Journal of Biblical Counseling*, Fall 2001, pages 2-9.

[24] "Yes," Martha said, "when everyone else rises, on resurrection day."

[25] Jesus told her, "I am the resurrection and the life. Those who believe in Me, even though they die like everyone else, will live again. [26] They are given eternal life for believing in Me and will never perish. Do you believe this, Martha?"

[27] "Yes, Lord," she told him. "I have always believed you are the Messiah, the Son of God, the One who has come into the world from God." [28] Then she left Him and returned to Mary. She called Mary aside from the mourners and told her, "The Teacher is here and wants to see you." [29] So Mary immediately went to Him.

[30] Now Jesus had stayed outside the village, at the place where Martha met him. [31] When the people who were at the house trying to console Mary saw her leave so hastily, they assumed she was going to Lazarus's grave to weep. So they followed her there. [32] When Mary arrived and saw Jesus, she fell down at His feet and said, "**Lord, if you had been here, my brother would not have died.**"

[33] When Jesus saw her weeping and saw the other people wailing with her, **He was moved with indignation and was deeply troubled.** [34] "Where have you put him?" he asked them. They told him, "Lord, come and see." [35] **Then Jesus wept.** [36] The people who were standing nearby said, "See how much He loved him." [37] But some said, "This man healed a blind man. Why couldn't he keep Lazarus from dying?"

[38] **And again Jesus was deeply troubled.** Then they came to the grave. It was a cave with a stone rolled across its entrance. [39] "Roll the stone aside," Jesus told them. But Martha, the dead man's sister, said, "Lord, by now the smell will be terrible because he has been dead for four days."

[40] Jesus responded, "Didn't I tell you that you will see God's glory if you believe?" [41] So they rolled the stone aside. Then Jesus looked up to heaven and said, "Father, thank you for hearing Me. [42] You always hear Me, but I said it out loud for the sake of all these people standing here, so they will believe you sent me." [43] Then Jesus shouted, "Lazarus, come out!" [44] And Lazarus came out, bound in graveclothes, his face wrapped in a headcloth. Jesus told them, "Unwrap him and let him go!"

A lot of things happen here, but we're only going to look at a few because they are closely related to our passage in Luke. Several things happen here.

One, Jesus gets angry. The text says, verse 33, "*He was moved with indignation and was deeply troubled.*" And then in verse 38, "*And again Jesus was deeply troubled.*"

This phrase, "deeply troubled," has more the meaning of "shaking with anger" or "quaking with rage." This is real anger here.

But notice, His anger is not directed at Mary or Martha. He doesn't get mad at their doubt, their unbelief. Both women have challenged Jesus. Martha in verse 21, ***“Lord, if You had been here, my brother would not have died.”*** And Mary challenged Him in verse 32, ***“Lord, if you had been here, my brother would not have died.”***

Jesus responds first with anger ... He gets upset, but as I said, not at Mary and Martha. And He doesn't get mad at God. He doesn't get mad at Himself. I mean, after all, He could have prevented this. The women are right. If Jesus had been there, Lazarus would not have died.

Why?

Because until He died, no one died in Jesus' presence ... ever. But He wasn't there, and Lazarus did die, and now He's angry. And He focuses His anger on death itself, He focuses on the tomb. And He turns this death into a resurrection.

That's the Gospel storyline.

Out of the cross comes resurrection.

Out of the weakness comes real strength.

Out of repentance comes real power.

Out of giving comes real wealth.

That's the Gospel storyline.

The other response of Jesus comes in verse 35, *“Then Jesus wept.”*

It's okay to cry at sad times. Jesus Christ is the most mature person who ever lived and here He wept openly and publicly. He grieved, He wept, He knew sorrow.

Now Jesus knew that He was going to raise Lazarus from the dead. He could have told everyone to “stop crying, watch this!”

But didn't, He wept with those who wept.

Third, Jesus didn't just give us a choice of anger or sorrow; He also brought the truth of the Gospel to bear in that situation. Verses 25-26, *“Jesus told her, “I am the resurrection and the life. Those who believe in Me, even though they die like everyone else, will live again. [26] They are given eternal life for believing in Me and will never perish. Do you believe this, Martha?”*

Jesus says, “Do you believe this?”

Do you?

Do you believe that Jesus is the Son of God who came down from heaven, that He is the incarnate Son of God who died on the cross so we could be forgiven, that God could someday destroy sin and evil and suffering without destroying us, that He paid the penalty for our sin so that we could participate in this?

Do you believe this?

And when this was all over, His enemies plotted to kill Him.

Which brings us back to Luke 13 and Jesus going to His enemies so they could kill Him.

Don't you think Jesus knew what He was doing and where He was going when He raised Lazarus from the dead?

Sure, He knew, and He made a deliberate choice.

He knew the only way to interrupt Lazarus' funeral was to cause His own.

The only way to bring Lazarus out of the grave was to bury Himself.

The only way to get Lazarus out of death was for Him to be killed.

He knew that.

Isn't that a picture of the Gospel?

We have a God who is so committed to ending suffering and death that He was willing to come into the world and share in that suffering and death Himself. Christianity alone of all religions tells us that God has specifically loved us; that God Himself lost His son in an unjust attack.

Only Christianity tells us that God has suffered.

Jesus acts so differently sometimes.

And sometimes Jesus lays truth on us.

And other times Jesus weeps with us.

Why?

Because Jesus is the perfect counselor.

Not like me. I try, but I tend to be a "truther."

I tend to say, "I have all this information, so let me try to fix things."

I want to say, "You need to know this and this and read this book."

And sometimes you just need somebody to weep with you.

And sometimes you go to someone and all they want to do is weep with you when what you really need is the truth.

But Jesus is the perfect counselor. He always gives you what you need.

If you need truth, you get truth.

If you need tears, you get tears.

He will give it to you the day you need it.

He will give it to you in the dosage you need.

He will give it to you in the order you need.

You need His tears, you need His truth, you need His anger.

You need all these things, but most of all you need His grace.

That is what you need most, and that is what He came to give.

And all who need it said, "Amen."