

Today, we are working on our perspective on persecution. Persecution is the systematic mistreatment of an individual or group by another individual or group. The most common forms are religious persecution, racism, and political persecution. Christ takes persecutions for what they are and subordinates them in service to the purpose of God. Persecution did not shut Jesus down or paralyze Jesus in doing His ministry. Today we will hear about how Jesus dealt with persecution.

The Gospel of Luke, chapter 13 begins with Jesus teaching the nature of the "kingdom" of God. It concludes with our passage, in which Jesus has a conversation with a group of Pharisees, warning Jesus about King Herod's desire to kill Him (vs. 31). This is surprising not because King Herod wants to take Jesus' life but because it's the Pharisees who tell Jesus about this.

Up to this point, the Pharisees as a whole group have been the persecutors of Jesus and His followers. They constantly went after Jesus and criticized Him and His ministry. It's difficult to understand why now they would offer this help to someone they believed was an enemy of the true faith. The Gospel of Luke does not comment on the motivations of the Pharisees. So, I will leave it up to your imagination.

Anyhow, here we have a foreshadowing of the events to come, though, as Jesus makes clear in His response, no one, not even King Herod, will be able to get in the way of God's will for Jesus' life. Jesus' response shows that He is undaunted by the forthcoming persecution news delivered by the Pharisees and offers a public criticism of King Herod's leadership (vs. 32.)— "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 other words, no one will get in the way of God's purposes, not even King Herod. Jesus then says He must press on.

What makes us flee from living out God's purpose for us today? What stops us from doing the good works of God joyfully? Lent is a time to let go of our fear of the people and things that plague us. Nothing will be able to deter God's plan for us. Prophet Jeremiah says that this plan of God is the plan to prosper us and not to harm us, the plan to give us hope and a future (Jeremiah 29:11). So, my siblings in

Christ! Fear not and press on doing the good works of God by trusting that nothing can deter God's plan. Amen.