

**“O Jerusalem, Jerusalem, the city that kills the prophets and stones those who are sent to it! How often would I have gathered your children together as a hen gathers her brood under her wings, and you were not willing!”** As we continue our Lenten journey this year, we listen to Jesus as He looks upon Jerusalem with lament, knowing what will happen to Him in Jerusalem, yet going there nonetheless.

Jerusalem is the Holy City, and it is still a special place even to this day, perhaps some of you have been there in person. The events of Holy Week and Easter will all take place in this city set apart by the Lord, and as we follow Jesus to Jerusalem this Lent, we learn: JESUS GOES TO JERUSALEM TO SERVE AS PROPHET, PRIEST, AND KING.

First, we learn that Jesus is the king, and I. Kings go to Jerusalem to reign (Psalm 2). What does it mean to be king? To be king of Israel means to be the hands of God Himself. What it means is that when the great Kings of old like King David worked to defeat the foreign enemies of Israel, it was as though the enemies were being defeated by the very hand of God. When King Solomon built the temple, it was as though God Himself was building that temple. When the kings punished wrongdoers, it was as though God Himself was punishing evildoers.

That was then, but in the time of Jesus, the idea of the King of Israel was a distant reality. Israel was under the rule of the Roman Empire, and any local ruler had to answer to Rome. In the olden days, the King had to answer to God alone, these kings had to answer to Caesar.

**“At that very hour some Pharisees came and said to him, “Get away from here, for Herod wants to kill you.”** The Herod the Pharisees talked about was likely Herod Antipas, whose dad was Herod the Great, King of Israel. Herod the Great wasn’t so amazing as he was the one who ordered the execution of the baby boys in Bethlehem around the time of Jesus’ birth. Herod Antipas also had a track record. He was the one who put John the Baptist’s head on a platter, and it seems like he was sharpening his knife to kill Jesus also. The hands of the Herod family were covered in innocent blood, they could hardly be God’s hands here on earth.

Perhaps Herod Antipas was intimidated of Jesus. Herod wasn’t even technically a king. He was a quarter-ruler who shared the rule of Israel with his brothers. We all know how sharing with siblings goes. Herod didn’t want a usurper to the throne.

Yet there were many who wanted a Messiah to arise to be the new king of Israel, just like King David. They wanted the scepter to return to the Jews so the King could flex his muscles to free Israel from their foreign overlords. They wanted to see God’s hands in action.

Jesus had many chances to turn his hands into a fist. On the way to Jerusalem, his disciples ask Him if they could call down heavenly fire to torch a village that rejected Him, but He rebuked them. In the garden, Jesus could have used the two swords to fight off the angry mob. He could have flexed his muscles to call angels down from heaven.

But He doesn't correct the crowds when they call out "**Blessed is the King who comes in the name of the Lord!**" on Palm Sunday as He enters Jerusalem. He doesn't speak up when they mockingly call Him the King of the Jews. He doesn't take a sharpie and make some edits to the sign above the cross that reads Jesus of Nazareth King of the Jews.

But if the King acts as the Hand of God, what do these hands do? "**And he said to them, 'Go and tell that fox, 'Behold, I cast out demons and perform cures today and tomorrow, and the third day I finish my course.'**" Jesus came as very God to cast out demons, heal the sick, and even heal the ear of Malchus in the garden.

As King He goes to Jerusalem to reign. His crown is of thorns. His throne is a cross. His hands—God's hands—are nailed in place. What this tells us is that this King of Israel—this King of the Jews—is not here to make his hands into a fist, but is locked in an open embrace for all those who seek refuge and forgiveness from him. Like a hen protecting her chicks, Jesus wants you to seek refuge in Him.

We also see that Jesus comes as a prophet. II. Prophets go to Jerusalem to do miracles, preach, and suffer. Jesus continues, "**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.**" If the kings are the hands of God, the prophets are the mouth of God.

To be a prophet is not simply to tell the future. Much of what the prophets did was to call the leaders to repentance. Yes, sometimes there were miracles, but the miracles were simply exclamation points to the message the prophet had to offer.

Yet many times the prophets were rejected. The people rebelled against Moses. Elijah was run out of town by wicked Queen Jezebel. Jeremiah was imprisoned and put into the stocks. A prophet named Zechariah was stoned to death even at the temple itself.

Jerusalem was the place where prophets went to speak the truth to power—and then die. Jerusalem was the place where prophets called the people to correct course, but the cart still careened out of control.

Isaiah the prophet wrote that the people of his time said "**...to the prophets, 'Do not prophesy to us what is right; speak to us smooth things, prophesy illusions, leave the way, turn aside from the path, let us hear no more about the Holy One of Israel.'**" Isn't that the spirit of our time also? Christians are

afraid to speak the truth for fear of being cancelled. Christians are afraid to share their faith for fear of being labelled a hater. Christians are afraid to speak out against hot button topics like abortion, gay marriage, transgenderism, and woke ideology for fear of being called bigoted, racist, or homophobic.

Prophets are the mouths of God, but we want a mute God. The 1999 film *Dogma* was made as a satire of religion. In one of the opening scenes, Cardinal Glick—played by George Carlin nonetheless—announces that the image of Jesus crucified on the cross, a crucifix, will be replaced by a more friendly representation of Jesus, which is a statue of Jesus winking, smiling, pointing at onlookers and giving a thumbs up. We can laugh at that because that’s what we want. We want a God who doesn’t correct us but implies we’re doing fine just the way we are.

But our God can’t be quiet. Thank you, God! We have sixty-six books of God speaking. Jesus was a prophet who preached all throughout His ministry. Teaching the lost, calling sinners to repentance, and underlining and highlighting His message with a series of miracles. He did all this knowing he would suffer for it.

Cardinal Glick, no need to retire the crucifix. Yes, a carved image may not speak, but Jesus, our prophet speaks, even from the cross. **“Father, forgive them, for they know not what they do.”** Our prophet prophesies even in His last hour. The mouth of God speaks calling us to return to Him.

Finally, III. Priests go to Jerusalem to sacrifice. If kings were the hands of God and prophets were the mouth. Priests are the heart of God. **“I was glad when they said unto me, let us go to the house of the Lord.”** An entire genre of Psalms in the Old Testament are dedicated to songs that priests and pilgrims would sing as they went up to Jerusalem. Jerusalem was *the* holy city because of the temple.

The temple of Jerusalem was holy because it was the place where the Lord God promised to be present with His people. Set on the very mountain where Abraham almost sacrificed His son Isaac. Set on the very mountain where King David sacrificed to God to end a pandemic—a timely reference, don’t you think? The temple of Jerusalem was a sign of the Lord’s heart toward His people, namely, that He wanted to be present with them and never forsake them.

Yet a holy God cannot walk in the midst of a sinful people, so that’s where the priests came in. The priests would go to the temple and offer sacrifices to atone for sins and to restore the relationship between God and His people which was marred by sin, rebellion, and transgression.

But the sacrifice of animals and produce from the field was a temporary solution. It would take more than that to pay for the sins of a crooked and twisted people.

**“I was glad when they said unto me, let us go to the house of the Lord.”** Jesus went to Jerusalem to make a sacrifice. Although in this text he laments the

city of Jerusalem and its rejection of Him, we can't help but believe that He had a quiet joy as He ventured up to the Holy City. He knew the mission He would accomplish. But instead of offering a bull or a goat, He would offer Himself as the very Lamb of God who takes away the sin of the world.

The priests are the heart of God, and the priests tell us of a God who doesn't want to be separated from His people, but will sacrifice anything to be reunited with them, even if it costs Him His life. And we see that's exactly what Jesus did. He was this priest for you.

Jesus is a Prophet, Priest, and King. He is God's mouth, heart, and hands in the flesh. He does it all for the sake of Jerusalem, and for the sake of you, beloved child of God. Amen!