**Luke 13:31-35**

**31At that very hour some Pharisees came and said to him, “Get away from here, for Herod wants to kill you.” 32He 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. 33Yet 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.’ 34Jerusalem, 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! 35See, 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.’”**

**Philippians 3:14 - 4:1**

**14I press on toward the goal for the prize of the heavenly call of God in Christ Jesus.**

**15Let those of us then who are mature be of the same mind; and if you think differently about anything, this too God will reveal to you. 16Only let us hold fast to what we have attained.**

**17Brothers and sisters, join in imitating me, and observe those who live according to the example you have in us. 18For many live as enemies of the cross of Christ; I have often told you of them, and now I tell you even with tears. 19Their end is destruction; their god is the belly; and their glory is in their shame; their minds are set on earthly things. 20But our citizenship is in heaven, and it is from there that we are expecting a Savior, the Lord Jesus Christ. 21He will transform the body of our humiliation that it may be conformed to the body of his glory, by the power that also enables him to make all things subject to himself.**

**4 1Therefore, my brothers and sisters, whom I love and long for, my joy and crown, stand firm in the Lord in this way, my beloved.**

**Message: Steely determination.**

**In the steady march towards Easter, we go first to the cross and the death of Christ. As with Jesus we have to go through the cross to get to the resurrection.**

**We think the Pharisees are always the bad guys, but it is wrong to generalize about a group of people and lock them into a set pattern of behaviour. Just like in the aftermath of world war two the world could not hold to the belief that all Germans were evil, neither can we hold to a belief that all Muslims are terrorists, or all Americans are haters. Yes, ultimately Pharisees in Jerusalem played a large hand in Jesus arrest, trial and crucifixion, but it seems like these Pharisees genuinely wanted to warn Jesus that Herod was out to get him.**

**Herod had form. It was he who had John the Baptist’s head on a plate. He was the ruler over the northern Galilee area. Clearly, he wasn’t going to have any disruptions in his patch.**

**Jesus reply was: ‘Listen, I am casting out demons and performing cures today and tomorrow, and on the third day I finish my work. If I can put this in my own words. Tell the old fox that he will not stop me doing my work. Herod doesn’t get to say how this ends. Jesus would keep on helping the people he was directed to touching and changing lives regardless of Herod’s threat.**

**Jesus knew it would end in Jerusalem. ‘33Yet today, tomorrow, and the next day I must be on my way.’ There is a sense of compulsion here he was being drawn, even driven towards this end.**

**Although still coherent you get the sense here that Jesus mind is really struggling with grief. On multiple levels every step towards Jerusalem must have been an extreme effort.**

**We are reminded of these words from Isaiah 53**

**He was despised and rejected by mankind,  
    a man of suffering, and familiar with pain. (grief, infirmity)**

**And then from Hebrews 2**

**10It was fitting that God, for whom and through whom all things exist, in bringing many children to glory, should make the pioneer of their salvation perfect through sufferings.**

**18Because he himself was tested by what he suffered, he is able to help those who are being tested.**

**Jesus, although sorely tested by the events which were unfolding, submitted to them and kept to his calling. We are drawn to Jesus because he knows our griefs and sufferings.**

**His heart breaks when he thinks of Jerusalem, the city of the great king, the city which would always protect the people. The temple was seen as a refuge, a safe house, the house of the Lord, where God’s very presence resided.**

**Jesus laments, that there was another side to Jerusalem and its temple – it killed its prophets and stoned those sent to it to do God’s work. I’m not sure of what history Jesus is referring to here, but his point is that the safe place, has not always been safe for those doing God’s work.**

**Grief overwhelms Jesus and He speaks as God himself – Oh Jerusalem: ‘ How often have I desired to gather your children together as a hen gathers her brood under her wings, and you were not willing!’ With such beautiful feminine imagery Jesus pours out his heart which is to gather not disperse, to shelter not to leave exposed. But, the people resisted the encompassing love of God and so left themselves exposed.**

**In a comment, most likely referring to the Temple he said: ‘35See, your house is left to you.’ The Temple was no longer the house of God, it was their house, and so it was helpless to protect people.**

**Jesus would not be seen by them, until he came in his glory. They would be blind to him until the day when people recognized and proclaimed: blessed is he who comes in the name of the Lord.**

**When we look at the Philippians reading: the point is God’s word strengthens us for today and gives us a hope for the future.**

**We are not to give up on believing in God’s purposes and lose hope. Our goal in life is different to the ones who only hope in God for this life and so follow the desires of their bellies and try to gain as much glory as they can in this life, setting their minds entirely on the here and now.**

**A Christian perspective is that it is God who gives our lives meaning and purpose. Also the questions God has for us about the success of our lives are quite different to the questions we might ask or the world might bring us to.**

**In the Christian life the goal is quite different. As we read: let us press on towards the goal of the heavenly call of God in Christ Jesus. The Heavenly call of God is a euphemism for either death or the second coming of Christ.**

**Having gained salvation through faith in Jesus Christ we are to press on, living faith-filled lives, until the day in which we are called home. When we think about our goals, we don’t maybe include the goal of the upward call of God, but this passage urges us to live the life of faith consistently until that day. We are to hold fast to what we have attained – clinging to the salvation we have been gifted – and maintaining the standard of living as mature believers. We are to live in unity, relying on the reconciling work of God where there are differences.**

**Paul said they were to imitate him and the leaders of the church who they knew. Elsewhere he says to imitate him as far as he is imitating Jesus. We can think of pillars of the faith whose example shows us the way (some here are pillars of the faith for other generations to follow), as far as their lives reflect Jesus Christ – no one is perfect.**

**We are not to fall away and become an enemy of the cross – giving way to our bellies, the fruits of our own appetites, becoming worldly, with our minds set on only earthly things.**

**No we are citizens of heaven. Our real homeland is recorded as, of the eternal kingdom. It is from there that we expect our ultimate salvation in and through Jesus. He will take our humble bodies, tired and worn out and give us new ones. Bodies according to his purpose and design. He will make all things new so that all things are subject to him.**

**What is not subject to him now? Every act of selfishness, anger, hatred, violence; every word of malice or gossip. Every ailment and sickness. Every cause for anxiety. These are the things which reflect a world which is not subject to him. And it is these things which we look forward to the end of.**

**So we are to stand firm in the Lord. Cling to our faith, live today as best we can, persevering on until the heavenly call.**

**Regardless of what the world might say, we have another, higher authority to answer to and we await, we even groan for the day when we are called home. Our longing is to hear his well done!**

**In relation to the events of Friday, and the mass shooting in Christchurch, it was Friday, the day in the week when Christians remember Jesus death for us, today is Sunday when we remember the resurrection of Jesus as the first fruits of our own eternal life. It was Friday, it is Sunday, but Monday’s a comin’. How will we behave at work, what attitude will we pass on to our families?**

**From our readings today, with steely determination we are to carry on. Jesus wasn’t put off his mission of healing and doing good. He also wasn’t put off the road before him towards Jerusalem. We are to take his example and keep on with our lives, doing good, healing, bringing people together. Knowing that our world is far from perfect we are to keep on walking the road that God has for us.**

**We are also to set our minds towards the goal of the homeward call of God. Realizing we are citizens of heaven does not mean we deny the importance of this life. No it means we live today and every day for God’s glory and not our own. We live now by the way of heaven. We live by the vision beyond the grave. We live for this day recorded in Revelation 21:**

**‘See, the home of God is among mortals.  
He will dwell with them;  
they will be his peoples,  
and God himself will be with them;  
4he will wipe every tear from their eyes.  
Death will be no more;  
mourning and crying and pain will be no more,  
for the first things have passed away.’**

**Prayer of response**