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"I must continue on my way today, tomorrow and the next day" (Luke 13:32).

Eph 6:10-20; Luke 13:31-35

In today's Gospel, some Pharisees warn Jesus that Herod is out to kill him. When one enemy tells you that another enemy is after you, it may be real or a way to amplify intimidation, but the truth was that Jesus was in danger. His reply reveals that Herod is a minor concern compared to the larger challenge ahead and that Jesus will not be deterred from his mission in Jerusalem, the most dangerous place of all. Go tell "that fox," Jesus says, that I will continue healing and driving out demons until it is time for me to go to Jerusalem, where all the prophets die.

Jesus completes his mission in Jerusalem because it is the holy center of the battle between good and evil, the place where all the forces, physical and spiritual, are converging to destroy him. Rome, Herod, the high priests, lawyers and religious parties are aligned there, but they are only agents of a darker, hidden power waiting to strike Jesus down for challenging its control as absolute dispenser of the power

and wealth that thrive in the corrupted status quo.

The Letter to the Ephesians, a post-Pauline summary of the Apostle's theology, captures in heroic terms the same spiritual combat Jesus faced in Jerusalem. The author writes: "Our struggle is not with flesh and blood but with the principalities and powers, with the world rulers of this present darkness, with the evil spirits in the heavens." Therefore, disciples must put on spiritual armor and wield the sword of the Spirit, the Word, to defend against the enemy.

We read this description with post-Enlightenment eyes but not lacking in appreciation for the hidden nature and complex forces today that can use every form of manipulation to infect public perception and the social discourse we rely on to define ourselves and our worldview. The goals are the same—to preserve wealth and power—but the means are vastly more sophisticated than at any time in history, with computer technology and mass media at work within the collective consciousness of millions of people.

Jesus walked straight into the dangers awaiting him, weeping for the failure of his generation to accept God's reconciling love. "I yearned to gather your children together as a hen gathers her brood under her wings, but you were unwilling." With this poignant parable, Jesus surrendered himself to the cross as his final gesture of unconditional love. But in sacrificing himself he exposed history's deepest secret, God's master plan to defeat sin and death with mercy and new life. A force more powerful than evil was lifted up with Jesus on the cross. The same primordial love that created the world had come to save it.

Baptism incorporates us into the crucified and risen Christ that now lives within history through us, his grace animating us to advance onto the battleground where love and hate, good and evil will play out. Are we prepared for combat?

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