

In this morning's gospel, Jesus is faced with death from two different realms. Now for most of us, if we were facing the threat of death, I think we would be concerned. But that is not true for Jesus. Jesus did not have any concern about either one and it is our prayer that as Christ's followers, we would follow what Jesus did.

The first realm that Jesus dealt with was the secular realm or the non-religious realm. Jesus was on his way to the cross in Jerusalem when he was approached by some Pharisees who say to him, "get away from here, for Herod wants to kill you".

The Herod mentioned here was Herod Antipas. He was the governor of Galilee during the time of Jesus' ministry. This is the same man who locked John the Baptist in prison and had him beheaded. We also do not want to confuse this Herod with Herod the Great, Herod Antipas' father, who was the ruler of Judea when Jesus was born. Herod Antipas was a crafty, cunning, cruel and deceitful ruler who cared little for others and a lot for himself. We knew that Herod wanted to see Jesus but now we learn that Herod wanted Jesus dead quite possibly because he saw Jesus as a rival.

Jesus understood Herod was cunning like a fox, but he calmly showed that Herod would not stop him from carrying out his mission of redemption. Jesus told them to tell Herod that he is not worried about his threat and he would not stop working until the work was done.

After hearing about the threat from Herod, Jesus quickly turns His attention to the main opposition that comes from Jerusalem which represents the religious authorities. It was the religious authorities who were furious with Jesus and wanted him dead.

In some ways, Jesus was a bit sarcastic in his words to Jerusalem. "O Jerusalem, Jerusalem, the city that kills the prophets and stones those who are sent to it!" We don't usually think of Jesus being sarcastic, but he does sound a bit sarcastic because Jerusalem was the religious center for the Jews. And so Jesus is literally saying that God's prophets can only be killed in the holy city. God's messengers are killed in Jerusalem, the holy city of God.

Jesus may have responded in this way because he knew the cross was coming. Jesus recognized the threat that Herod made against his life, but he also acknowledged the greater threat to his life: Jerusalem. Jesus wasn't worried about Herod because Herod had no power over him. And he also did not worry about the other threat which came from the religious leaders.

Jerusalem represented the religious authorities who were seeking to kill him because they hated him for his teachings. Like Herod, the most likely reason the religious authorities wanted Jesus dead was because they viewed him as a rival.

Jesus faced two main types of opposition during his earthly ministry: secular and the religious leaders. It is amazing that Jesus is not concerned about either of them but instead continues to do the work he was called to do. Jesus was not afraid of Herod nor was he afraid of Jerusalem because he was confident that he was doing the will of God. Jesus had a divine commission and knew it would be completed.

This country is a wonderful country to live in, but what would happen if the USA as a whole became hostile to Christianity? What if our government takes away some of our religious freedom? What if they oppose our principles to such a degree that they shut down our church and throw us in jail? What if we face secular opposition such as this, what will we do? Like Jesus modeled for us, we will boldly proclaim the good news of the gospel of Jesus Christ.

What if, in the name of religion, we are mistreated and persecuted? What if a false brand of Christianity emerges that seeks to destroy true authentic faith? Like Jesus models for us, we will boldly proclaim the good news of the gospel of Jesus Christ.

The reason we have this confidence is because we come in the name of the Lord! We are Christ's followers, we have his message, and we have his power because we believe and trust in what he did on the cross. We will finish the work he has called us to do and we will not stop until we have completed that work.