

Duck and Cover
[Luke 13:31-35](#)
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March 16, 2025

On March 3, 2025, at 5:02 am, Richmond was rattled by an earthquake measuring 4.5 on the Richter scale. The shaking woke me up – not the shaking from the earthquake, but the shaking from Johanna. “Curtis, it’s an earthquake, wake up!” she said. And I woke up, and felt the earth moving, and said, “cool, an earthquake,” and turned over to go back to sleep. And Johanna said again, “Curtis, it’s an earthquake. We have to get the children to a safe location. Get out of bed.” So I got up, while Johanna went and picked up Lewis and carried him into Calvin’s room, and we all sheltered under Calvin’s bunkbed, with Lewis enthusiastically counting to 30 but not getting all the numbers exactly right. And after 30 seconds the shaking was long over and there were no signs of aftershocks, so we tucked both boys back into bed, and tried to get a little more sleep ourselves before the morning routine had to start. And I have to admit that the next morning, I teased Johanna a little bit about her rigorous dedication to following the safety plan for what turned out to be such a small little earthquake – but in the end, I would much rather overreact to a small earthquake than underreact to a big earthquake. For my entire life in BC, they’ve been warning us that the Big One is coming, and when that day comes, Johanna’s vigilance will be much more helpful to our family than my

desire to get another 30 seconds of sleep. When trouble comes, when danger is all around, you need to have a plan of what you will do to protect yourself and the people you care about. You need to be able to assess the danger and react accordingly, to see where the trouble is coming from and help keep that danger away from the vulnerable people in your care.

And this is true about more than just earthquakes. Our world is a dangerous place, and it sure feels like it's getting more dangerous by the minute. All around the world, there are wars and rebellions, unjust governments persecuting their citizens, natural disasters destroying people's homes and livelihoods, climate change making the entire planet more vulnerable and unpredictable. For a long time, here in Canada we liked to think that this country was one of the safe places, a place of refuge for people around the world to come and find freedom and prosperity, and that is still true, but lately it feels like the safety and security we've taken for granted here isn't quite as safe and secure as we used to think. It's been really easy to just stay cozy and comfortable in bed while the shaking gets worse and worse, and now we're starting to wonder if we should be heading for the shelter before it's too late. When trouble comes, when danger is all around, you need to have a plan of what you will do to protect yourself and the people you care about. You need to be able to assess the danger and react accordingly, to see where the trouble is coming from and help keep that danger away from the vulnerable people in your care.

And this was also true in Jesus' time. Jesus lived in a world that was filled with danger and peril at every turn – a world ruled by the iron hand of the Roman Empire, all this vast military and bureaucracy designed to enforce Roman justice, Roman order, Roman will on the people under their control. Anyone who posed the slightest challenge to the power of that Empire would be eliminated without a second thought – anyone bringing any kind of criticism of the government or claiming another kind of authority for themselves was a threat. If you wanted to survive in that Empire, you had to have a keen understanding of danger; how to see it coming and how to avoid it, how to keep your head down so that the cruel and powerful would hopefully just leave you alone.

And this means that as soon as Jesus started his ministry in Galilee, there was a target on his back. Feeding the hungry and healing the sick was bad news for the government that wanted their people poor and hungry and unhealthy so they would be easier to control. And claiming to be a King – claiming to represent the Kingdom of God, calling for people to serve and follow God instead of following Rome, that was treason, that was asking for death. So it's no wonder that everywhere Jesus went, danger followed him – spies watched his every move, reporting on everything he said and did, taking the news back to King Herod, Rome's representative ruler in Galilee. It was only a matter of time before Herod decided that Jesus had gone too far, that it was time to make an example of him to show the world who was really in control.

So when a couple of friendly Pharisees bring news to Jesus that there's trouble afoot, that Herod's soldiers are on their way to arrest Jesus and kill him, you would expect that Jesus would listen. You would expect that Jesus would drop everything – stuff all his belongings on the back of the nearest donkey and ride as fast as he can for the nearest safe house where he can hide until things calm down. This is an earthquake – the ground is shaking under his feet, the walls are rattling and the bookshelves are starting to sway, and it's time to duck and cover, it's time to run for safety. But Jesus doesn't do that. In the middle of this earthquake, this calamity, with danger all around him, Jesus doesn't run. Jesus doesn't hide. Jesus doesn't protect himself. Instead, he decides to do the worst possible thing you could do in this circumstances – send an insulting message back to the guy who is on his way to kill you. “Oooh, Big Bad King Herod is coming to kill me? Oooh, I'm so, so scared. Listen, you go tell that fox that I'm a little busy right now, dealing with demons and diseases and all sorts of troubles that are way more dangerous than a two bit local king, but I can maaaaybe fit him in on, let's say Tuesday. Does Tuesday work for Herod? Go ask him. I'll wait.” This is absolutely crazy. The ground is shaking and breaking apart beneath his feet, and Jesus is rolling over to get a few more minutes of sleep. Jesus refuses to recognize that Herod poses any kind of danger, any kind of threat to his safety – he completely dismisses the possibility that this powerful agent of Roman cruelty could ever cause him any kind of pain or trouble, could ever hold any power over him. Instead, Jesus recognizes where the

real danger lies, for his ministry and his own life – he isn't frightened of Herod, because he knows what God's plan for him is, and that plan is for him to go to Jerusalem to die, to give his life. Jesus knows that the real danger isn't Herod, it's waiting for him in Jerusalem.

And yet, even though Jesus knows that Jerusalem is where the true danger lies – Jerusalem is the city that kills the prophets and stones those who are sent to it – Jesus isn't actually afraid for himself. He knows that he's going to go to Jerusalem, and he knows what will happen to him there – he knows that he'll be betrayed, arrested, condemned, and killed. But Jesus isn't worried about his own life. He's worried about Jerusalem. He isn't worried about his own safety – he's worried about the safety of the people of Jerusalem, the very same people who he knows will be responsible for his death. He knows the trouble that they're facing, the danger all around them, and he knows that the greatest danger they face isn't in the world outside Jerusalem, it's the danger within them, the danger of their own sin and pride and rebellion, their inability to recognize what God is trying to say to them, how God is trying to reach them. God keeps reaching out to the people of Jerusalem, sending messenger after messenger, prophet after prophet, trying to break through their defenses, trying to make them understand who they are meant to be as God's beloved children, and each and every attempt has ended in rejection, more danger, more trouble, more pain, more death. And now God has sent his only son to Jerusalem, and Jesus knows that even this will not reach them, even this will not make them

understand what God wants them to be. Jesus isn't frightened of Herod, and he isn't afraid of what waits for him in Jerusalem, but when he considers the people there, their stubbornness, their pride, it breaks his heart. How I have longed to gather your children together, as a mother hen gathers her chicks under her wings. Jesus knows the danger they're in, and like a loving mother he desperately wants to protect these beloved children, to bring them to safety, to cover them with his wings and keep all the evil and danger of this world away, and yet they are not willing. They refuse to accept God's protection and deliverance, because they refuse to recognize where the danger truly lies – not outside their walls, not in powerful empires and armies, but in their own hearts, in their own stubborn desires. Jesus isn't worried about his own safety – he wants to protect the people he loves from the pain they are inflicting on themselves, but they refuse to listen, they refuse to follow, they refuse to come and take shelter in his strength and find safety in his arms.

We live in a world that is full of danger and trouble and pain. There are far too many Herods in power around the world, Kings who use their power to oppress their own people, Kings who allow injustice to thrive, Kings who pursue wealth and comfort and glory no matter what the cost. But for all their bluster and tyranny, for all the trouble they can cause, the greatest danger we face in our lives, in our world, it isn't out there, it isn't in Moscow or Tehran or Washington DC, it's in here. It's in us. Each one of us are capable of acts of selfishness and cruelty and carelessness and pride.

Each one of us through our actions and our inaction contribute to the trouble and pain of this world. All too often we are our own worst enemies – when we rely on our own strength, our own wisdom, to try and save ourselves, and we turn away from the good things God is trying to give us, we reject the good words of justice and love God is speaking to us. Our God knows the danger we face, the trouble we've caused for this world and for ourselves, and God wants to save us, God wants to lift us up out of the mess and the muck of our broken world, to shelter us under his loving arms, gather us as a mother hen gathers her children under her wings, and the only thing that stands in the way of that happening, the only thing that keeps us from living in God's protection and providence and grace, is when we are not willing, not willing to accept that grace freely offered, not willing to seek safety and shelter in our Father's care. The greatest danger we can face is thinking we don't need God's love, we don't need God's strength, thinking we can make it on our own, going back to sleep when the world is shaking and rolling and falling apart all around us instead of taking shelter in the strength and love of the one who died to save us and set us free. In Jesus Christ, our God has done everything necessary to save us from the brokenness of this world, the brokenness of our own sinful selves. All we have to do is let ourselves be saved, let ourselves be rescued, let ourselves be carried in God's loving arms out of the trouble, out of the danger, and into the kingdom of God.

And if we say no – if we still reject God's love, if we are still unwilling to be gathered in his loving arms, the voice of Jesus Christ still calls to us. The one who faced every kind of danger for our sake, who laid down his own life so that we could live, Jesus Christ still calls to us, still promises us his grace and his love, no matter how many times we've failed, no matter how many times we've turned away. The strength and peace and love of Jesus Christ are always there for us – our God is always ready to gather us in, to gather us under his wings and hold us close. There is nothing we can say or do that can ever put us beyond the reach of the grace and love of Jesus Christ. All we have to do, here and now, is say yes. Stop fighting against his love, stop holding out against his spirit working in our hearts, and let his strength protect us, let his word speak to us, let Jesus Christ gather us as his beloved children, held in his care, now and forevermore. Today, may we say yes to Jesus Christ. Amen.