

Preparing for the Olympics takes determination. You have to want it bad because you're going to spend hours practicing, every day, for years. And all that just to have the chance to make the team that goes to the Olympics. There you're going up against the best competition in the world. If all this wasn't enough without warning your biggest cheerleader, the fan that was looking forward to your being in the Olympics the most, is gone. It happened to Canadian figure skater, Joannie Rochette, this past week. Just days before she was to skate in her first ever Olympics her mother died. What to do, skate or not? With determination and resolve Rochette skated and earned the bronze medal.

I don't know if you've ever faced anything quite like that. Even if you haven't, it doesn't mean that your life hasn't had those moments where you considered stopping all together. Life gets too hard to push through and giving up seems pretty good. Job is overworking us, we think about quitting. School work gets too hard, we think about faking sick. Chores pile up around the house and we think about a vacation. Our natural reaction is to let our resolve break down when things get hard.

Jesus faced heavy opposition at times. He had his glory days, but they were few and far between. Mostly he faced people who didn't want to hear what he had to say. Mostly he faced people who didn't believe in him. At its worst he faced outward rejection. And he faced the prospect of death constantly. But in the gospel we see none of that mattered to Jesus...

**The resolute Savior marches on
In love still facing rejection
In love still facing death in Jerusalem**

"Which shoes should I wear?" One look at the clock tells you there's no right answer. You're already late, both shoes look fine, and you can't tell what matches anyway. But you pick one. Now were you picking the ones you want her to wear because they look nice or because you want stand a chance of making it on time to the event? Wouldn't it be great if people would just say what they mean?

Jesus said plainly what he meant. Not everyone who thought they were getting into heaven was. Some would think they were good enough or were following the right path, but in the end would hear the dreadful words, **"I don't know you or where you come from."** Because the Pharisees thought, rightly so, that Jesus was speaking directly to them they responded. But was it as friends or foes? **"Leave this place and go somewhere else. Herod wants to kill you."** Were they serious and trying to help? Were they just trying to get him to Jerusalem faster so they could get rid of him? Why not just say what they mean?

If the Pharisees were hiding their rejection of Jesus, Jerusalem was being quite open with its rejection. The City of God, the holy city, the place where many prophets lost their lives often provided the backdrop for rejection of God's spokes persons. It happened to Jeremiah. Just as soon as he finished his prophesy **"the priests, the prophets and all the people seized him and said, You must die!"** He proclaimed God's Word and faced full rejection. Same thing happened to Jesus. Numerous times he'd been to Jerusalem and preached. Almost always he was rejected. They didn't swarm to follow him. Rather they swarmed him to try and capture and kill him.

In general the world rejects Jesus as Lord. There's no surprise that in many places Jesus is openly and honestly rejected. Our hearts, on the other hand, are a little bit harder to read. Take your time in church here this morning. What's really on your mind? Are you hiding some secret sin of your past? Maybe if you hide among church-going people God won't notice or some holiness will rub off on you. But surprise there's rejection of Jesus here too. Be open and honest about your sins. There's no use hiding, God already knows each of them. Stop rejecting Jesus by keeping the sin bottled up. Confess it before God.

The Pharisees really wanted to see Jesus run away. But Jesus didn't run. **"Go tell that fox, I will drive out demons and heal people today and tomorrow..."** Jesus had reason to stay to heal people and cast out demons. **"...and on the third day I will reach my goal."** He did have someplace to go, but he wouldn't leave out of fear. He wouldn't be forced out. Jesus would leave on God's plan and will, and not a second before. The goal was always first for Jesus, God's plan to save us. That goal was why he faced rejection. All the rejection and suffering was for you and me. He faced it so he could win the victory over it. No way to avoid that; be glad he didn't. In love he faced the rejection of those Pharisees, Herod, Jerusalem, and you and me.

Moving on from rejection is never easy. Getting dumped by your first boyfriend or girlfriend probably took some time to recover from. How long before you sent out another resume after the first job you applied for turned you down? The first time you presented an idea at work that the boss didn't like, how long before you spoke up again? Rejection is hard. Jesus faced it from at least two groups. But he's got to move on. In love he faced that rejection because in love he's moving on to something much bigger. In love Jesus is moving on to face his own death in Jerusalem.

I imagine your family plan for when the tornado siren goes off includes huddling in your safe place. It probably includes mom and dad taking the children under the arms to make them feel safe. That's much like a hen gathers her chicks under her wing. It's the place where they feel safe. Jesus wanted to gather Jerusalem in the same way, protect it under his powerful arms. But they were not willing. So destruction was coming for them. **"I tell you, you will not see me again until you say, Blessed is he who comes in the name of the Lord."** Jesus was looking ahead to the time when he would return and everyone would see him. They'll recognize him as Lord, but not everyone will recognize him as Savior. For some Jesus will be the punishing judge.

Do you want Jesus to be your personal savior? I mean more on call than always hanging around. Gather under his wings for protection when you decide you need it, but the rest of the time be free to fly in life wherever you want. Do whatever you want to do. See and experience whatever you want to experience. Pay attention because those thoughts put Jesus on the path that leads to the cross.

Jesus was marching resolutely to his death. He knew it and shared it with everyone listening including us. There was no stopping its coming now. But don't be fooled into thinking that's all there is. Jesus' death isn't worth anything unless there's a resurrection. Resurrection is coming because Jesus is coming again. Death isn't the end of the Savior. And death won't be the end of us. Jesus' resurrection means we get a resurrection. Jesus longs to gather us under his protecting arms. Jerusalem wasn't willing. By faith, we are.

With more resolution than an Olympic champion our Savior sets his sights on Jerusalem where his enemies won't just try and beat him, they'll kill him. Our enemies are everywhere trying to destroy us, drag us into sin, or fool us into sinful earthly pleasure. Be resolute. Don't be discouraged when people don't respond to your heartfelt faith or listen as you tell them about Jesus. Don't be discouraged when they walk away still in pain because they refused to be gathered under the wing of Jesus. Do keep sharing, keep living the faith, and keep your eyes on the goal. Jesus resolutely marched on still facing rejection in love for us. He resolutely marched on knowing death was coming in Jerusalem. He did it all because he loves us. He did it all because he knew we couldn't be saved any other way.