



Charles Lyons, Pastor
Armitage Baptist Church
Chicago, Illinois

Who will mourn for our city, or your city?

Tehran. 1978. My father was down a side street, looking to buy a gift for my mother. He discovered the shop keeper had a limited, heavily accented English vocabulary. “Where you from?” the man asked. “Chicago,” my father answered. The merchant’s face took on an expression of amazement and fear. He held out his hand like a gun exclaiming, “Chicago — boom, boom.”

Ironically, a black kid from North Carolina did what the mighty and storied Irish Polish Democratic machine could not. Michael Jordan momentarily became the world’s first thought of Chicago. We took care of that in short order. The filth, the evil, the slime that is the Chicago power structure oozed down Interstate 55 to Springfield and under the unlikely and unpronounceable Blogojevich label, tainted our representation in Washington, making us the object of ridicule internationally.

All is not happiness and light. There is a time appointed for everything. There is a time to weep. There is a time to mourn. Who will mourn for Chicago? Who will mourn for our city? Who among us is even interested in having a soul capable of mourning for this great city?

Jesus marks His life mission clearly in Luke 13:31-35. Faced with opposition, He persists in carrying out the purpose for which He was sent, independent of the Pharisees and Herod. Mindful of but not controlled by their thoughts and their plots, Jesus models steadfast persistence. “Nevertheless I must walk today, and tomorrow, and the day following...” In any case, regardless, God’s plans will be completed.

But Jesus cries out, “Oh Jerusalem, Jerusalem, which killest the prophets, and stonest them that are sent unto thee; how often would I have gathered thy children together, as a hen doth gather her brood under her wings, and ye would not! Behold, your house is left unto you desolate...” Jesus mourns for His city. Yes, it’s a city that represents a nation, but here we see Jesus looking beyond the physical, political, and historical realities. He sees things as they truly are. It’s God’s perspective that matters. If I am to follow Jesus, I must carry His burden for His city. Following Jesus means I embrace mourning. It is mine to be burdened with the greed, the gore, the grief, the hardness, the hatred, the blindness, the blatant disbelief.

Oh Jerusalem, Jerusalem, your history will not save you. Your history of God’s choice and past glory will not save you. Your legacy of David and Solomon — days of victory and plenty will not be your deliverance. Your religion with its glorious temple and fastidious observance will not bring rescue. Your politics, notable in the annals of world history, will not save you.

Oh, Chicago, Chicago, city of brawn and bluster, center of the Daley dynasty, guarded by ubiquitous spires soaring from raucous gritty streets and placid shaded avenues alike.

City of far more players than prophets.

City of way more religious presence than godly living.

City Billy Sunday couldn’t shut down.

City of schemes and scams, clout and corruption.

Who will mourn for a mayor who appoints a self-proclaimed homosexual to oversee a system intended to serve 400,000 school children?

Who will mourn for a city council so densely populated by petty thieves, puppets and political pirates?

Who will mourn for a business community working so readily, so cozily with one of the most corrupt political machines in American history?

Who will mourn thousands of young men, cold, lost, violent, scared, or the tens of thousands of babies slaughtered in our clinics and their mothers who thought they had no other choice?

Oh Chicago, Chicago, your museum campus and Millennium Park will not save you.

Your gorgeous lakefront will not save you now.

New school buildings and fancy condos, stunning skyline — the best minds of University of Chicago will not save you.

Your legendary political might, your international reputation, the 2016 Olympics...

Oh, Chicago, none of these can save.

Jesus mourns His way to the cross. Jesus looks for mourners — those willing to carry the spiritual burden of compassion and concern for their cities. Who will carry the spiritual burden for your friends if you don’t? Who will mourn for your work associates if you don’t? Who will mourn for your city if not you?

Every follower of Jesus will mourn as he goes. This is our city.