

“Fox, Hen, and Chickens”
Sermon 2-28-10
Immanuel Lutheran Church
Neal Collins, Pastor

Luke 13:31–35

At that very hour some Pharisees came and said to him, "Get away from here, for Herod wants to kill you."³² He said to them, "Go and tell that fox for me, 'Listen, I am casting out demons and performing cures today and tomorrow, and on the third day I finish my work.'³³ Yet today, tomorrow, and the next day I must be on my way, because it is impossible for a prophet to be killed outside of Jerusalem.'³⁴ Jerusalem, Jerusalem, the city that kills the prophets and stones those who are sent to it! How often have I desired to gather your children together as a hen gathers her brood under her wings, and you were not willing!³⁵ See, your house is left to you. And I tell you, you will not see me until the time comes when you say, 'Blessed is the one who comes in the name of the Lord.'"

PICTURES OF GOD

What pictures do you carry of God in your mind? What words do you think of when you hear God's name? Big, powerful, omnipotent, the score keeper, loving, distant, punitive? Of course, no one has seen God the Father, so our imaginations probably say more about us than truly describing God. What we do have is a "visible form of the invisible God" (Hebrews) in Jesus. In the Agnes Dei, we sing "O' Lamb of God who takes away the sin of the world", but this morning we are presented with a different image of Jesus, in terms of how he sees himself. Now if this presentation is the "visible form of the invisible God", then you want to revisit your image of God and see how it stacks up with the image Jesus has of himself.

FOX IN THE COOP

Our Gospel this morning opens with the word "SOME". "Some Pharisee's" is like saying some Republicans, Students, Democrats, Women; but not all Women, Students, Democrats, or Republicans. We have propensity to judge a chain by its weakest _____. Right, link. "Some Pharisee's came to Jesus saying, "get away from here Herod wants to kill you." This is confusing, because just a few paragraphs back they are the evildoers. In chapter 12, Jesus warns of their hypocrisy. "Some" Pharisees would rejoice in Herod's handling the Jesus situation because he challenged their self-focus, self absorbed, narcissistic, and grandiose religiosity. Jesus is gaining in popularity. He is a threat. So, to say there is an assassination plot by Herod just might make him turn around and head home. One person suggested that Herod might be a fox, but he is not the only fox in this particular chicken coop." (Stroffogen).

PHARISEES

It is important for you to that the Pharisees were viewed as honest, good, obedient, smart, and trustworthy folks. The fact that they believed the scriptures needs to be seen through the eyes of the times, and the situations in front of them. The believed that what one did in the world was as important as what

happened in the Temple. They were a little bit to the left, but not as far as Jesus. So, this little “white lie” by “some” was to get him off their radar screen. Jesus responds to their “warning” by saying, “Go and tell that fox for me, I am casting out demons, performing cures today, tomorrow and on the third day I finish my work.” That “fox”, Herod, does the dirty work for Rome. Jesus is on his way to Jerusalem, today, tomorrow, and on the “third day” it is finished. What happens on the third day? “And on the third day he_____”. Right, “rose from the dead”. Jesus blows off the threat and continues on his mission to Jerusalem.

JERUSALEM

Of the four Gospel writers, Luke addresses Jerusalem almost 100 times, while the other three writers mention Jerusalem about 50 times combined. Luke’s Gospel begins in Jerusalem with Zechariah in the Temple, and ends in Jerusalem with Jesus’ appearance to his disciples. Jesus speaks to Jerusalem saying “Jerusalem, Jerusalem, how I long to gather your children (Pharisees, Sadducees, Essenes, poor, those who mourn, weep, and peacemakers, lawyers and scribes...) as a hen gathers her brood under her wings?” “How I long, how I long”.

IMAGES

Now let us go back to our image of God, and the “visible image of the invisible God”. How many of you pictured Jesus as a mother hen? When you envision a mother hen, what kind of images come to mind for you? What? Not punitive, distant, cold, or aloof? Jesus sees Jerusalem as the place to display what God is like, as opposed to the image of the Messiah being a military general.

MOTHER HEN

A Mother Hen? I am troubled with this image. A Hen.... He can’t be King of the Mountain or the Jungle as a “Hen”. The images of animals for God in the Older Testament consisted of images like a mighty Eagle (Exodus), and the Lion. Contrasting the image of Jesus as a hen and Herod as a fox, many of the chicks (Pharisees and others sided with the fox). Jesus chose the images of the hen, challenging our perceptions. Ten years ago Barbara Brown Taylor wrote in the Christian Century how “the heart of a hen is fully exposed to the fox when her wings are open along with the other vital organs.” She has no fangs, claws, or anything to defend, but will stand between her chicks and the harm by using her body. “Take and eat, this is my Body given for you.” The fox has to kill her first, and he does. In the cross we get the true image of God, as a suffering lover for the world.

LOVE

Who sitting here this morning doesn’t understand this kind of love? Walt Wangerin talks about the power of this kind of love in a story about his son Matthew. He said, “Three times I tried to get my son, Matthew not to steal comic books.” Matthew was obsessed with them and couldn’t get enough of them. The first time he was apprehended was when he stole from the public library. Walt thought, well maybe a shaming lecture from the librarian would embarrass him enough to stop. Wrong! The second time he was caught Walt tried the 7th

commandment, which is _____. Right, "thou shall not steal" and then burned all his comic books saying "Doesn't that fire remind you of hell?" So Lutheran! The third time was while Walt was teaching at Seminex in St. Louis Matt went to a store around the corner and stole some comics. This put Walt over the edge. He felt he had no choice to use the "board of education". When the hand came down to hit Matt on his bottom he felt his son's body becoming stiff like a board. After four or five time spanking his bottom he left the room. He was in tears, went back into the room and gave his son a hug. "A number of years later while the family was driving in the car: Matthew says "Dad do you know why I stopped stealing comic books?" Walt said, "Yes, I finally spanked you." His son said, "What!" And he looked at me. He said, "No... It's because you cried."

GOD'S LOVE

The image of the "visible form of the invisible God" in Jesus may not be all that strong, powerful, or mighty. Looking at the cross, it is a love we can understand. In the cross, Jesus cried for the world for the love. In all the images you can come up with for God, can you add suffering love that knows no limits?