

Sermon for Feb. 24, 2013 Second Sunday in Lent

Luke 13:31-35

Blessings to you and peace from God the Father, our Lord and Savior Jesus Christ  
and the Holy Spirit. Amen

When I was a young girl growing up in Northern Illinois **every** summer my family would go to visit my Aunt Edna and Uncle John's farm outside of **Storm Lake**, Iowa. Uncle John **mostly** raised corn but they did have a few **barn** cats and some chickens running around the place. **One** year when we went to visit I noticed that the **chicken** coop was gone. Uncle John told me that there had been a fire, the chicken coop was a **total** loss, and they had to tear it down. He then **proceeded** to tell me the story of how when he went back into the coop the morning **after** the fire-he heard a noise. As he got **closer to it** he noticed one of the hens who had died in the fire. From **underneath** this hen came this cheep, cheep, cheep sound. It seems that this hen had died **protecting** her young chicks from the flames. She had **died** so these chicks could live. Her **instinct** had taken over, as in the face of the **rising** flames, this hen had **gathered** her young brood together and **covered** them with her body. She was their **only hope** for safety. She was willing to **risk her own life** by drawing them **in under** her and **covering** them with her wings. This hen gave the **ultimate** sacrifice to save the lives of her young.

Now you **may** be saying to yourself, isn't Pastor giving this hen—which are generally **not known** for being too motherly **or smart** for that matter—a little **too** much credit? Because a hen does **not cuddle** her young or **make sure** they are sleeping safely at night. But when a **predator** or some **danger does come** near or as in my aunt and uncle's case when the coop catches on fire she will **try to collect** them under her wings to keep them **out of harm's way**. Pulling them **safely** beneath her she will **cover them** with her body, **risking her own life** for theirs.

For me this story of what happened at my aunt and uncle's farm takes on a **deeper meaning** in light of our gospel reading for this morning as we hear Jesus referring to two **very different** types of animals as well as **lamenting** over the people in Jerusalem.

First, Jesus refers to King Herod as a **fox** who wants to kill Jesus. As one of my commentaries says, (quote) “Jesus sees Herod as a **varmint** in the Lord's field, a **killer** of God's agents, and one who **disrupts** God's will in favor of doing his **own will**.” (end quote) You may remember that King Herod was the man who had John the Baptist **imprisoned and then beheaded**, he was the one who was known as a **doer of evil things**, and Herod is the one who Pilate will send Jesus to at the time of Jesus' arrest in Jerusalem. If you think about the words which would **describe a fox** they would be: cunning, destructive, cleaver, dangerous, sly, predatory, sneaky, and deceiving.

The **other** type of animal we hear Jesus speaking of in this reading is a hen who **gathers** her brood under her wings. A hen, on the other hand, even though they are **known to flee** that hand that feeds them—and **isn't that in itself** is a good illustration of the relationship between we humans and God sometimes—hens are known as **protectors** who are **willing to die** for their chicks, she **hovers over them** to keep them warm, she **shelters her young** from harm under her wings, she is **tireless**, she **teaches** her young, and she is a **place of refuge** for them. Now it becomes **even clearer** as to why Jesus would have given the example of a hen. He is the one who **gives his life** for the protection and safety of those he loves. All of us. He is the one who **pays the ultimate price** to spare the lives of others. All of us.

What does this story **say to us** about how much God cares for us as well? Think of what **God has done** for us all. God **shelters us** and **takes care of us** in our time of need and this church is **most certainly** in a time of need right now. We **need God's love and care**. Just yesterday we had **another** memorial service for one of our own. Melinda's death and memorial service makes **5 deaths** this congregation has endured since the beginning of this year and not only that, I heard yesterday that **on Friday**, Bernita Stevens, our oldest member died as well. Make it 6. Oh, Katie Williams grandfather died yesterday. Make it 7. God help us!!

God **takes care of us** in our time of need. Can any of us say that we have **never been** scared at night, or **not felt afraid** of death, or **not felt the fear** of loneliness, or have **not been worried** about our own children's future, or have **not been worried** about our own finances or job security? God **takes us** under His wing, he **shelters** us, and he **takes care of us** in our time of need no matter what that need might be.

In our reading Jesus also **laments** over the city he loves. He says, "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!" How about us **are we willing**? **Have we turned away** from the warmth and comfort God has offered us? In these words of Jesus we hear the **sound of God's voice** filled with sorrow. We **sense God's heart breaking** with the tender emotion of one who **loves his children** who have turned their backs on Him. The ones "WHO WERE NOT WILLING". These children have **strayed away** from him. How could such a thing happen? **How could they/how could we** be so rebellious in our lives to **turn away from** the blessings of safety and security that God has so **freely** offered to us? Especially when God has **been there for them and us** through so many difficult times?

In this reading for today Jesus was **on his way** to Jerusalem. He **knew** what he was facing when he got there. Jesus knew that his **earthly destiny** was to die there, **not** on the way, **not** when he was traveling, **not** to be killed by “the fox” King Herod, but to die **IN** Jerusalem itself—the city that **kills** the prophets and **stones** those who are sent to it. Both Jesus’ journey to Jerusalem and his death there will be controlled by **his faithfulness** to God’s purposes for his life, not by anything King Herod threatens to do to him. Herod will not stop Jesus from completing his mission. Jesus is going to **continue** to cast out demons; Jesus is going to **continue** to cure the sick. It was **necessary** for Jesus to be on his way.

Those of us who live on **this side** of the cross we know the end of this story. We know **God’s redemptive powers** that came to pass. We know what Jesus’ journey to Jerusalem will mean. His cry to the city is an **urgent plea** to repent, to **come to God**, and to **know the safety and security** which only God can provide. Jesus **foretold** the time that he would be seen in that city as on **Palm Sunday** we will hear the people there crying out to him. “**Blessed** is the one who comes in the **name** of the Lord.” This happens **only a few days** before he is crucified.

This morning, once again, God **calls out to you to and to me**. He calls us to the **shelter** of his protective wings. God who is **merciful and unchanging** never gives up on us. Jesus **calls us into the safety** of his arms outstretched on the cross.

He **calls us to trust** that these arms are **strong enough** and his **wings are wide enough** to keep us **safely tucked** under them in our times of need.

Throughout Lent we are **preparing ourselves** to experience Jesus' cross. It is in the **shadow of that cross** and it is under the **protection of the loving shelter** of outstretched wings that **all of us are saved**. Thanks be to God. AMEN