

Pastor Jon's Sermon from Sunday, March 16, 2025

“Jesus the Mother Hen”

In our Gospel, Jesus employs the image of a mother hen to describe his mission from here on out, which will involve going to Jerusalem and a cross.

I have not seen a mother hen in action, but I understand, she will not leave her chicks alone... gathering them under her wings, even if it means that she might be killed herself.

In Luke 13:31-35, Jesus is under a political and physical threat from King Herod, who wants to kill Jesus. But Jesus will not be deterred from heading to Jerusalem to confront the seats of power, even knowing that Jerusalem is the city that kills the prophets.

Why, then all of a sudden, do the Pharisees seem to be on Jesus' side telling him of Herod's scheme to kill him. The Pharisees wanted to kill Jesus too for attracting huge crowds, breaking the Sabbath laws in the Torah, and threatening the Temple business model. But when compared to siding with Herod Antipas, it seems that Jesus is now part of the Pharisees in-group.

King Herod was a puppet politician... in cahoots with the Roman Empire. He oversaw the regions of Galilee and Perea. Josephus, a 1st Century Jewish historian, portrays King Herod as both a capable ruler and a ruthless tyrant, highlighting his ambition, paranoia, and tendency towards violence. Josephus acknowledges Herod's accomplishments in building projects, like rebuilding the Second Temple in Jerusalem. But, Josephus also emphasizes Herod's paranoia and his tendency towards violence, including the execution of his own family members, and the slaughtering of innocent children once he found out that a new king was born in Bethlehem. Josephus also depicts Herod as a man driven by ambition and a strong desire to maintain power, even resorting to extreme measures to do so.

It is obvious Jesus has no fear or loyalty toward King Herod. He calls Herod a fox... someone known for their craftiness, lack of strength, and proclivity for destructiveness.

But then, we get a real window into Jesus' heart. He is tired of rejection. Rejection by the Pharisees, the chief priests, and the scribes to name a few... the disciples aren't batting a 1000 either. Many people don't believe that Jesus is the Messiah... the Son of God. But soon, Jesus will reveal his true identity and glory on the cross and in the resurrection.

In the meantime, Jesus employs the Hen image. Jesus longs to unite people of all backgrounds, even his antagonists, under his reign, like a hen gathers it's young under her wings... a powerful feminine image for God in the Bible.

But when I think of a hen gathering it's young, especially if a fox is near the coop, I think of the fierceness of a Hen flapping her wings, spinning around, pecking, and squawking like nobody's business. Jesus fiercely wants to unite all people, regardless of political and religious differences, under his wings of love and justice... even to the point of his death on a cross.

At this point, Jesus has predicted 3 times that the religious leaders will reject him kill him and hang him on a cross and after 3 days he will be raised from the dead. In fact, Jesus mentions the 3rd day in his response to the Pharisees. Jesus has tried to get it through their heads that he is the Messiah, teaching through parables, healings, and miracles. But they still reject him.

But Jesus' kingdom is breaking in as we speak. It transcends all the kingdoms of this earth. Regardless of the Herod's and Ceasars of this world, Jesus is still the way, the truth, and the life... the one who unites us. According to Romans 8:38-39, the Apostle Paul proclaims, "For I am convinced that neither death, nor life, nor angels, nor rulers, nor things present, nor things to come, nor powers, nor height nor depth, nor anything else in all creation, will be able to separate us from the love of God in Christ Jesus our Lord." That love of God in Jesus is the thing we should ground our faith and ethics in.

How do we bring this closer to home?

First, Thankfully, we have a God who will never give up on us like a mother hen protects her chicks... even if we aren't quite there yet in the faith department.

Second, maybe you are getting weary or fearful right now as we deal with economic and political turmoil in our country and across the globe. Think of the mother hen Jesus and his dedication to his mission. He did not let Herod's threats deter him.

Third, our salvation is not found in politicians, power, or popularity. It is simply found in the cross of Jesus Christ and his resurrection. It is found in what looks like apparent weakness and rejection. But it is there God was saving the world. And we pray, thy kingdom come, thy will be done, on earth as it is in heaven.

Amen!