**Sermon Lent 2C – Luke 13:31-35 – 16/3/22**

**Sermon Video link:** [**https://youtu.be/IQtSNdnGh40**](https://youtu.be/IQtSNdnGh40)

**Today we heard Jesus mention two animals, a Fox and a mother hen.** What do you think of when you think of a fox? Foxes are cunning, violent, clever, sneaky and resourceful. Herod is described as the fox. The mother hen on the other hand is protective of her young always trying to keep them close to her and keep them safe. Jesus describes himself and therefore also God the Father as a mother hen trying to protect her chicks. I think that is interesting, don’t you? Foxes and hens don’t mix very well do they? When a fox meets a hen trying to protect her chicks usually one comes off far worse than the other. Why didn’t Jesus use the image of a lion or even an eagle, why be a vulnerable hen?

Well, let’s just keep that image in the back of our minds for a moment, a fox and a hen protecting her chicks.

**Jesus is on his way to Jerusalem but still in Herod’s territory and some Pharisees came to warn him that he should leave because Herod wanted to kill him.** Let’s assume these were friendly Pharisees - because some Pharisees actually liked Jesus, some even became disciples of Jesus. Let’s assume they were telling the truth and Herod did want to kill Jesus, just as he had killed John the Baptist. Instead of leaving, Jesus insists that Herod, even though he is a fox, won’t stop him doing what he came to do. Jesus is going to hang around in Herod’s territory as long as it takes to complete the job he came to do – to force out demons and heal people. When he is ready then he will continue on his way to Jerusalem.

**Jesus is not worried about Herod because Herod is not in control.** God is in control, Jesus is in control and a mere earthly ruler, no matter how ruthless or powerful he may be, cannot do a thing to stop God’s plan. God’s plan is that Jesus will die in Jerusalem and God’s plan will and does succeed. It is good to know that God’s plans always succeed. God’s plan for Abraham and Sarah to have descendants that number more than the stars we can see with the naked eye looked impossible. Miraculously Sarah had one child in her old age and through that one child God’s promise was fulfilled. God’s plan to save all of humanity through his Son succeeded and God’s plans for you his beloved baptised children will also succeed. Sometimes it may look like they won’t but God has not broken a single promise he has ever made.

**Jesus is fulfilling God’s plan and he will stay in Herod’s territory as long as is necessary and then he will go to Jerusalem.**  Jesus will go to Jerusalem that has rejected and killed God’s prophets and messengers for centuries. Jerusalem where God’s chosen people have continually turned away from God and even turned his temple into a den of robbers and thieves.

**But why does Jesus go to Jerusalem?** Does he go there to judge the city and its people? Yes! And he knows he will find them guilty. And when he finds them guilty what will be his first impulse? To punish, to destroy, to give them what they deserve? No! God’s first impulse and the first impulse of his Son Jesus is to gather the people and the city under his wings like a hen gathers her chicks and to protect them from the consequences of their sin.

**What an amazing picture of God’s compassion.** A hen gathering her chicks. That is how God wants to deal with Jerusalem, that is how God wants to deal with his people, that is how God wants to deal with us! When we stray away from God and go our own way. When we stop living like the people of God and instead become more concerned with our own sinful appetites, God wants to gather us back in under his protective wings. When what we want becomes more important than what our friend, neighbour, even our enemy needs, God sees our guilt, even declares us guilty and he warns us of the consequences of our sin, but instead of punishing us his first response is compassion. Like Jesus on the cross, God first says, “These poor little chicks don’t know what they are doing.”

**And in a sense it is true**. We often do live our lives like little chicks running around all over the place not knowing what we are doing. Instead of staying close by God our mother hen, we get distracted and we run off looking for something or someone better. We look for warmth, security, pleasure and even happiness in every place but under God’s protective wings. On Sunday we come and gather for a while under God’s wings but soon we run off again into our everyday life living as though we barely know God at all. Sometimes we can even get to the point where we wonder whether we really need God at all.

**Meanwhile, Satan that wily fox that today many Christians barely even think about, is on the lookout for his next tasty meal.** Waiting for us to get so immersed in ourselves that like little chicks losing sight of their mother, we too lose sight of God and become yet another juicy morsel for Satan to snatch away permanently from God our mother hen and devour us.

**But God will do everything in his power to not let this happen.** Jesus knew that Jerusalem was lost and doomed to destruction, but still he went resolutely onward to the fox’s den. He exposed himself to the foxes in the city, knowing that it could only end one way. The hen would be killed. Still, Jesus went forward driven by his love and compassion into the face of death.

**And die he did.** The foxes got their hen and for a while it seemed like they had won yet again. Well at least for three days. But then the hen rose from the dead never to be killed again and at last God’s promise was fulfilled. The final victory is God’s. The foxes of this world do not have the final victory. Sin does not have the final victory, death and the devil do not have the final victory. Christ, battered and bruised in his determination to save us is the final victor and he is still and will be forever gathering us up under his protective wings.

**Amen.**

***Pastor Rolf Lungwitz***