

Sunday, March 13th, 2022

2nd Sunday of Lent



As a Mother Hen

Scripture: Luke 13: 31-35

Reflection: Today's gospel is one of the interesting ones, with many layers and textures. At the start of the scripture, we see some Pharisees having deep concern for Jesus and brings him a message that he should flee Jerusalem because Herod is after him.

That is pretty curious in itself because Jesus had an interesting relationship with the Pharisees. Most of the time, in the Gospels, the Pharisees are the bad guys; they're constantly out to get him, to trap him into saying things that go against their laws, so that they may arrest him.

So who were the The Pharisees? They were an influential religious sect within Judaism. They were known for their pious disposition and they were about keeping the laws of their religion and holding everyone else's feet to these laws and traditions. They were mostly middle-class businessmen and leaders of the synagogues, and we recall Jesus butting heads with them on several occasions, as he thought they valued laws above the welfare of the people.

So here we are, where these guys are trying to offer Jesus protection against Herod. This leads us to believe that not all Pharisees were bad, that some were probably adherents to Jesus and his movement, possibly friends. But the main point here is that they came to warn Jesus, to offer him some protection as he made his way to his crucifixion.

And then we see a reversal in the script, from the high priests in the city offering Jesus protection to Jesus wanting to offer all of the people, who whole city of Jerusalem God's protection.

Jesus laments over the city of Jerusalem in a way we never seen before. He is grieving and is sorrowful over the spiritual state of the people of Jerusalem. They had rejected God and turned against God's message of love and forgiveness. They are in a sad spiritual state. And Jesus is absolutely heartbroken to see the state of affairs in this city.

How many times have you guys lamented at the state of our city, the growing homelessness, and violence. I lament in sorrow in grief every time I visit or drive by the Mission. The dynamic there has changed significantly since I started on the chaplaincy team six years ago. Now we are seeing younger people, more women, young women. There's Greater need than ever before... We are dealing with a different type of drug addict, people who are harder to interact with, therefore more difficult to journey with and advocate for. I know how Jesus feels.

(Central: in our board meeting this week, we had an episode of lamenting over the state of our downtown, which is affecting our church building, didn't we? The break in on the second floor and theft of some of the instruments, the graffiti on the side, the countless vandalism that is happening on our beautiful building. We love our property, but even more so, we love and care for the homeless folks who find shelter on our steps, we lament that their situations, and we grieve and sorrow that we cannot do more for them.)

But during Jesus' lament we hear something that we do not often hear in the Bible. In fact, it is so rare that some of us become uncomfortable with the concept. Jesus speaks of God as a female, as a mother hen. Verse 34 is profound and it gives us an unfamiliar view of Jesus. Heart broken, torn, sorrowful, possibly in tears... "Jerusalem, Jerusalem, you who kill the prophets and stone those sent to you, how often I have longed to gather your children together, as a hen gathers her chicks under her wings. But you were not willing.'

Makes me think of us as parents. How we enjoy having all our children together in one space. And how we protected them as much as we could as they were growing up. There's nothing we wouldn't have protected them from. And even now. It doesn't

matter how old our kids are, we have a natural inherent need to protect them, to keep them safe.

And just like Jerusalem, it doesn't matter how wayward our kids are, how much tears and worry they have caused us, we never stop loving them, we never stop fighting for them, we never stop praying for them. We can identify with Jesus in his lament, in wanting to nurture Jerusalem as a mother does her child.

This image, this metaphor of God being like a female bird with wings is also present in other scripture passages, Deut; Isa. and it is especially scattered throughout several of the Psalms—17:8; 8 Keep me as the apple of your eye; hide me in the shadow of your wings.

In chapter 36:7 How priceless is your unfailing love, O God! People take refuge in the shadow of your wings. 57:1; 1 Have mercy on me, my God, have mercy on me, for in you I take refuge. I will take refuge in the shadow of your wings until the disaster has passed. What a beautiful concept of comfort that is...

The is the thing: This image, this metaphor of God being like a mother hen gathering her brood of chicks under her wings is true to real life. Hens are willing to spread their wings in protection over their chicks whenever a predator like a snake or a cat or a hawk comes along.

Moreover, they are also willing to sacrifice their own life by protecting their chicks. As a Caribbean girl, who grew up with chickens running around the yard, I can assure you of how protective the Mother birds are. I've been attacked and pecked at more times than I can count by mother hens protecting a nest which I didn't even know about.

And living along the river, on my daily walks, there's nothing like seeing a mother goose with her gathered, oftentimes big brood, of goslings under her wings, protecting them from the chill of the Spring rain. It reminds me of the poem Mother Bird from Cloud Poetry:

Mother bird: She builds a nest, builds a home, Out of twine and twigs and love Day and night, dawn and gloom, She works in trees above. All to prepare for her offspring! To give them the

chance to fly, Only the best for her children, These are the words to her cry.

A fortnight her eyes are skinned! She is sentinel over her eggs! Come storm, gale, blustering wind, Her treasures safe under her legs

At last she meets her brood! Hungry and unrefined She tirelessly gathers food !Their lives now intertwined. She kisses the food into their beaks!She cares for their every need She answers their every scream To love, to tend, to feed. She watches them grow new feathers, And reach out to the beckoning sky! They want to see other weathers, So she teaches them how to fly

They soar higher and higher! She watches from below. It makes her smile and smile To see her babies go. As they climb and tumble She makes sure to let them know! They are always welcome to return To the home built long ago? The love she gave her young ones Gave them the strength to fly The strength to build their own nests! High up in the sky.

Such a beautiful expression of love!

Jesus, on his way to the cross, laments the upheaved state of Jerusalem. On this second Sunday of Lent, what are you lamenting? What are you sorrowing over and grieving for? This is certainly the time to feel these things, and other crosses that we are carrying in your lives.

But even at this time, even in Lent, we cannot lose sight of God's love for us. God who hovers and protects and comforts like a Mother does. God who embraces us in our times of fear and worry, and assures us that all will be well. Christ our Mother Hen loves us; protects us; even dies for us. For this immeasurable love, we say: thanks be to God!

Prayers

Lord God, in your holy word today we heard that you ask us to come to you—and that more—you seek us out like hen seeks out her chicks; that you offer us the protection and the safety of your strong wings. Help us O God to stop each day and to listen for your call; to pause and allow you to overtake us; to wait and to have your warmth and your wisdom overwhelm us:

Father and Mother of us all, you have given us many images of what you are like in the law and the prophets and through the ministry of Christ Jesus our Lord. You have been compared to a hen seeking out her chicks, to a rock which cannot be moved, to a mother suckling her child, to a wind which cannot be control and a fire which cannot be quenched, to a woman seeking out a lost coin, to a king who invites everyone to his wedding feast, to an eagle who stirs up her wings and shields the young in her nest, and in each of these images we learn more about you.

Grant us, O Lord, a personal image of your presence— an image which will sustain us we seek to love you with all our heart and soul mind and strength and as we seek to love one another as Jesus loves us:

Loving God, we stop here today to think not only of ourselves and our needs. We pause not just to have our cups filled by your love, we stop as well on behalf of others. We come on behalf of our shutins ... we pray for those in our hearts....

We hold before you those whose cups are filled with bitterness and anger, those who have lost their way and who worship success and the idols of our world, we name them before you and ask that you give them new hearts—hearts that are filled with goodness and with faith.

Lift too we pray, O God, the burdens that are upon us for those around us: here in our church, our community, and our world. We pray this prayer in the name of Jesus, who taught us to pray...