

# The Fox and the Mother Hen

**2nd Sunday of Lent**

**February 21<sup>st</sup>, 2016**

*“ How often have I desired to gather your children together  
as a mother hen gathers her brood under her wings.” Luke 13: 34b*

Prayer: Mother, Father, God who is like a loving parent, we come to you when we are afraid of the foxes in our lives. We come seeking your protection and love. Help us to trust that you know what is best for us. Surround us as a hen covers her chicks with her wings. Open our minds and hearts to your word for us today. Amen

**I want to start with a riddle that you can ponder in case the message gets too long.  
There’s a farmer that has a hen, a fox, and hen feed and has to get them across a stream?  
How does he get them over a stream carrying one thing at a time without the hen eating the  
food or the fox eating the hen?**

In Luke’s gospel Herod is compared to a fox. The fox reference is not a compliment. Jesus means that Herod is a beast: *“ At that very hour some Pharisees came and said to Jesus . “Get away from here Herod wants to kill you .” Jesus 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.”* Luke 13: 31-32

Jesus implies that his enemies have no power over him until the time set by God for Jesus’ passion and death.

The further we move into Lent, the clearer it becomes that things are not going well for Jesus. He has stirred resistance. The Pharisees are uneasy. Usually they are out to get Jesus but here, in an act of friendship, they are warning Jesus. Herod is miffed and wants to eliminate Jesus. Jesus is very matter of fact about how much he has to do before his time is up. When those around him say “Slow down and be careful” Jesus says “Move ahead!” The evidence points to Jesus willingness to move ahead even though the witnesses are increasingly clear about the **cross** that awaits. At the risk of his own life, Jesus has brought the precious kingdom of God within reach of the beloved city of God, Jerusalem, but the city of God is not interested.

Jerusalem has a fox as its head, who demands a great deal more respect.

Consider the contrast ...

..... Jesus has disciples; Herod has soldiers.

.....Jesus serves; Herod rules

..... Jesus prays for his enemies; Herod kills his!

In a contest between a fox and a chicken whom do you think would survive?

The Gospel image of the Fox and the mother hen is quite intriguing. I love the image of the mother hen gathering the chicks protectively under her wings. If you put your-self into this picture can you feel the comfort or are you afraid of the fox? What foxes loom as predators in your life? What are you afraid of? Do you want protection?

Now it is stone time. Please hold onto your stone. This is not a weapon against foxes or other menacing mind benders. I want you to think about your fears. What are you afraid of? Are you afraid of financial losses or your batteries running low? Are you fearful about a health issue or a concern for a loved one? Some of us face fears that are much bigger than a fox.

Hear these reassurances from the scriptures:

In Genesis, God is speaking to Abram and says: “*Do not be afraid, I am your shield....*”

Psalm 27’s opening lines: “*The LORD is my light and my salvation; whom shall I fear?*

*The LORD is the stronghold of my life; of whom shall I be afraid?*”

The stone this week is for discomfort and maybe I should have named it fear, you can decide. My intention was for us to think about discomfort in our relationships with our brothers and sisters in faith here! Have there been some conversations or disagreements that have made you uncomfortable? Are there some grudges that you are holding on to?

“*My friend left because...*” “*I remember when so and so said... I was so mad!*”

“*I was offended by .....*” “*That meeting when...*”

When you think about it now does it help to hold on to that feeling, or can you put it down?

All too often the memory is bigger than the moment! That doesn’t help!

Perhaps the memory is not one that can be just dropped and you need to talk about it first.

I am here to listen, call me. That might be wiser than opening old wounds....

As we build a shared community of faith there may be some thoughts, beliefs or traditions that you are afraid of losing? The Denomination, Anglican or United, as we have known it is changing in many ways, perhaps your fear rests there? I hope you will focus on this community on Gabriola. What are you afraid of? What are you afraid of if you let it go?

Sometimes we hold on to things for too long.

Please take time to look at these fears this week. Are they worth holding on to or can you let them go? If they are significant enough for you to hold onto then you are welcome to call me to talk about them. This is an important part of the transition work we are here to do together.

Good relationships are important especially in a faith community. We all come from different directions and life experiences. Our church experiences have even been different. Now here we are together in this faith community. With God’s guidance we can build good relationships and a strong faith community.

In Barbara Brown Taylor’s Book Bread of Angels: “Chickens and Foxes. P.124, 126

Barbara Brown Taylor writes:

*Our individual relationships with God are very important, but they do not make us the body of Christ. It is our life together that makes us Christ’s body, a mysterious organism that is much more than a collection of individuals. When we come together to worship, we form a new being, which has its own life and reputation. We call it the church – not the building—but the people—a phenomenon that has been around longer than any of us! The church is more than its individual members. Do we, as a faith community, resemble the body of Christ?*

*Imagine the church of Christ as a big fluffed up brooding hen, offering warmth and shelter to all kinds of chicks, including orphans, runts, and maybe even a couple of ducks. The church of*

*Christ planting herself between the foxes of this world and the fragile –boned chicks, offering herself up to be eaten before she will sacrifice one of her brood.*

*Maybe that is why the church is called “Mother Church.” It is where we come to be fed and sheltered, but it is also where we come to stand firm with those who need the same things from us. It is where we grow from chicks into chickens, by giving what we have received, by teaching what we have learned, and by loving the way we ourselves have been loved --- by a mother hen who would give his life to gather us under his wings.”*

For Jesus, God’s passionate dream, compassionate desire and bold determination, is to gather God’s human children closer and closer to God’s embrace and love. That mission and commitment is at the center of Jesus work. Like a mother hen, God seeks to draw, to embrace, include and welcome God’s children into the family of humanity.

So have you figured out the answer to the riddle?

**There’s a farmer that has a hen, a fox, and hen feed and has to get them across a stream? How does he get them over a stream carrying one thing at a time without the hen eating the food or the fox eating the hen?**

**He takes the hen over, then the fox, then he takes the hen back and takes the seed over. Then he takes the fox back to the first side and he takes the chicken back over. They have all been over the stream one at a time. In the end the fox is on one side and the hen and the feed are with the farmer.**

I think that God works that way in our lives too. The life challenges that we face may seem overwhelming but when we trust God to be with us at all times, we can get to the other side of our troubles.

This is the good news for today. Thanks be to God.