

Sermon Date: 3/13/22

Preacher: Rev. Judy Arnold

Scripture: Psalm 27& Luke 13:31-35

So, Jesus is making his way to Jerusalem, slowly - healing and casting out demons; slowly but intentionally, Jerusalem is his destination. Jerusalem, he says, the city that kills the prophets, perhaps thinking of what awaits him. He is warned away from his destination by some Pharisees - which sounds strange to those of us who have been brainwashed into thinking Pharisees desire nothing more than to be rid of Jesus. Pharisees like every human community have a diversity of thought and feeling. Some were intrigued by Jesus less as competition but more as colleague.

Their warning doesn't sound strange to us - we know the end of the story, but even those who didn't, would believe giving Herod a wide berth might be a good idea. Jesus doesn't dispute or deny the warning that Herod wishes him harm - Jesus, though, will not be rushed. He is following the timetable his Father has set out for him. I love how Jesus says, you tell that Fox that I am healing and casting out demons today and tomorrow - but I might be able to squeeze him in on the third day - a reference redolent with the odor of death.

Jesus knows his fate is to take place in Jerusalem and even as he knows that he holds out hope that instead of separating him, killing him, that they might see him for the loving, gathering wings he offers.

It is the Christian story in a few words. Earthly power versus the power of love. Herod is lurking on the sidelines waiting for Jesus to be within his grasp - foxy and conniving but not quiet and secretive. Everyone knows Herod wants to be rid of Jesus - of Jesus' seeming popularity and also to ensure that the chaos and crowds Jesus attracts don't wreak havoc in the seat of Roman control.

Everyone knows Jerusalem is a danger for those who challenge authority. Everyone would expect Jesus to be at the least cautious and at the most belligerent. But once again Jesus counters traditional power - military and monetary - with the least likely opponent - a mother hen gathering her chicks; a mother hen lamenting over the chick's resistance to her protection.

We've been witnesses, these last few months, to a scenario somewhat like this. Like the Pharisees invoking Herod's name to scare Jesus, the buildup of Russian military might (n) on the borders of Ukraine, the invoking of the name Putin, were intimations of war, threats that the sovereignty of Ukraine must be returned to Russian control. Putin hasn't said exactly what he wants, but his armies lurked on the border like a fox - pacing and listening for prey.

Putin is seeking an end to Ukraine's desire to be part of Nato; Putin is seeking to silence dissenting voices. But a silence imposed is not gone but gone underground. As Jesus replies when the Pharisees urge him to silence his disciples "I tell you, if these were silent, the stones would shout out."

But what is to be done? Are the disciples to cease their Hosannas? Are the Ukrainians to cease resistance? Like shouting stones, the silenced Ukrainians would burst back into protest at some point.

There is outrage over the Russian invasion. Not only is it a land grab, Putin is also committing war crimes in the bombing of civilian locations. Like Putin, Herod, Jerusalem is the city that kills the prophets; stones them.

Prophets of any era, any generation, have been annoying at the least and threatening to the silence dictators so rely on. Prophets are almost always eliminated because they speak an uncomfortable truth.

As I said earlier, this text is again the Christian message in a nutshell. Herod is threatening with the power of Rome behind him and Jesus is countering with the offer of sheltering love; the Mother hen, he says, has room enough under her wings to welcome and protect as many people who hear the truth and respond. And, she, the mother hen, is spreading her wings in Kiyv right now.

And in Kivy, prophets are being killed. Prophets who range from children to the aged. The truth of their outrage; the lies that seek to justify the injustice; these will be present for Jesus in Jerusalem. Shouts of Hosanna from the crowds will turn to shouts of crucify Him. Many will be silent - some out of fear, sadly some out of indifference. Jesus bemoans this when warned of Herod and reflecting on Jerusalem. Jesus is not bemoaning his future, he is lamenting the unwillingness of the people to turn to him; to accept and rejoice in the wings of a Mother Hen who calls her chicks home. And as he bewails this resistance, he utters what to me are the most chilling words in the Bible. They aren't words of being thrown into the outer darkness, or cast into hell. He simply says, you were unwilling and "see, your house is left to you." Your house is left to you. It is not a threat, not even a

dire prediction of calamities to come. It is a simple statement, 'see, your house is left to you.' Jesus isn't even pronouncing judgment - just a simple statement of fact: your house is left to you.

But as always with Jesus, no door, no wing is ever closed - even to Herod should he see the light - Jesus aches with the desire to gather us around him. For me, having my house left to me - God and God's people going somewhere and me in my house, empty, desiring no God, acknowledging no God sounds worse than death. When a Mother Hen beckons you, respond. It is the first step in getting the foxes out of the hen house or converting them to the truth.

Holy One, my Beloved, my Savior, my Chief,
you choose to be a hen in the realm of the fox.
You choose kindness in the face of evil.

Give me faith to do the same,
to heal instead of hurting,
to choose kindness even when threatened.

Give me courage to be a mother hen
in a world of foxes,
for always I am under your wings.