

## **Transcript of 2nd Sunday in Lent Sermon - March 16, 2025**

You might be intrigued by the number of religious observances and holidays that seem to have

merged in our culture. Things that are happening over the weekend.

Hindu people are celebrating their festival of holy which is a welcoming of spring but it is also

the affirmation that good wins out and I don't know a lot about the tradition except that the

vibrant colors are a way of lifting up that optimism that good wins out. This weekend Friday

was also Purim for our Jewish siblings and that too has a great element of playfulness to it.

Now despite the serious stakes of the story of its toll but also an opportunity for people to

give charitably and to remember who they are and we as Christians in this season of length

we too are reminded that we live under the mercy and the love and the grace of God.

Today's image that we will be playing with a little bit is Jesus as mother hen.

That's probably not the image that a lot of our culture packs when they talk about Jesus

but that's the one that Jesus gives of himself.

## **The Holy Gospel according to St. Luke the 13th chapter.**

At that very hour some Pharisees came to Jesus and said get away from here.

Herod wants to kill you and Jesus said to them go tell that fox for me listen I am casting out

demons and performing cures today tomorrow and on the third day I finish my work. Yet today

and tomorrow and the next day I must be on my way because it is impossible for a prophet to be killed

outside Jerusalem. Jerusalem the city that kills the prophets and stones those who are sent to it.

How often have I desired to gather your children together as a hen gathers her brood under her wings

and you are not willing. See your houses left to you and I tell you you will not see me until

the time comes when you say blessed is the one who comes in the name of the Lord.

The gospel of our Lord.

### **Sermon**

Grace and peace to you.

May the words of my mouth and the meditations of our hearts be acceptable to you oh God

our strength and our redeemer. Amen.

[no audio]

It would seem that a hen protecting chicks from a fox would be a sitting duck.

That's a lot of poultry. That image of Jesus though as mother hen

it should disturb us it should bump us off center because ours is the world of foxes and eagles.

Consider that fox hered. Sly maybe. But also foxes in Jesus world and in the imagination of those

people were not considered top of the food chain. So Jesus might even be somewhat dismissive of this

fox. Is that false bravado though when one remembers our friend the fox Herod?

Christmastime. What's the story we read about Herod so paranoid that

somebody's going to take

over his little kingdom that he puts the word out against infants and children?

Do you remember Herod's interaction? He smirks with John the Baptist.

Didn't end well for John the Baptist. You see where this is going?

Herod that fox does not make idle threats. Herod that fox has been put into his position

thanks to the eagle. That's the symbol of the Roman Empire in case you're wondering.

And it wasn't long before the Pharisees warning that Pilate will hear from him later.

Herod slaughtered Galileans and he mixed their blood for sacrifices to the cult of Caesar.

This is not for the faint of heart. This stuff. And it's significant that it is the Pharisees

who do the warning because often we want to write them off as Jesus enemies, but really

that was probably the community he was closest to. And so their debates were like in-house debates.

But they were also the people who in nonviolent ways tried to state a tradition for the sake of

integrity in the face of an empire that wanted to assimilate them and turn them into a bunch of little

Romans. Those are the people who warned Jesus. Now it is noteworthy that there were other parties

in the faith and in society who learned that for safety and economic benefit it was easier

to cast their lot with the fox and the eagle and they did. But not the Pharisees.

So that has absolutely nothing. There is no parallel between any of that and what we see in the world today is there.

Trying to read the room here. Well, is that guy lost it? That was my attempt at irony.

I guess it didn't go that well. But think about this. Empathy as a potential thing to be outlawed?

Mercy as a thing to be rejected and ridiculed and to question the legitimacy of people asking for it?

It does seem like, I can't believe I'm going to say it this way, but I am just because I'm feeling feisty.

It would seem that the fox has all the cards. Did you get that one? You did too, you're sharp.

But is that true really?

There was an image this week of the Archbishop Marianne Edgar Buddy who received letters of support

for her calls to mercy and to remember that there are people who are living scared.

And the response took the form of a picture of metal trays.

Remember the size of those rooms and how many letters you could stuff into a single tray?

These trays were stacked on top of each other and they went from floor

to a height higher than the Archbishop's head to the ceiling.

And that my friends was snail mail. I'm not even counting email, voicemail, texts.

So not all buy into the way of the fox and the world of the fox that demands loyalty by brute

force or economic leverage. But on the other hand, that's our hedge.

Maybe we would fear that we too would be sitting ducks.

I think Jesus knows something that in this life, he probably is no match for the empire.

He is no match for the fox. And yet even in his vulnerability as a mother, fierce as mothers are in their protection, she literally risks her life for the sake of the

people she loves as Jesus wishes he could risk his life for the people in the city and the faith that

he loves. But so many would rather either try to go it alone or form some sort of uneasy

alliance with the fox and the eagle. And there would be those who actually would oppose violently.

And now remember Jesus responses twice. When threatened by the empire, he says, well, you tell

that fox when you get a minute. I'm busy. I'm busy delivering people from their suffering.

I'm busy blessing and saving the world right now. And I think that takes precedence. Thank you.

That's his response there. And his response to even knowing full well that the protection he would offer and the care he offers may well be ignored.

He doesn't withdraw the offer. Does he?

And now I'd like to say something that I think is fairly scandalous.

I believe, should it ever happen that the eagle and the fox asked the hen for mercy?

The hen's response would be Jesus' response to a tax collector, a collaborator with the empire who

wished for a better life. And what does Jesus say to Zacchaeus? Today, this very day in your little

city, Zacchaeus, mercy and love have found you and will transform your life.

When the Romans put on their spectacle of executions, and that's what they were

designed to do,

where it was to intimidate people into submission and to kill troublemakers all in one fell swoop,

there was a thief next to Jesus being executed who asked for mercy. And what does Jesus say?

This very day, you will be with me in paradise.

We might think the fox is going to win in the end. We might think that the eagle will triumph.

But no.

But the mother hen will never force. And so it may be a very, very long time before things are ever

reconciled. But that doesn't mean that God and Christ are not about that reconciling.

There's a story told in India about an old man who people make fun of because he keeps trying to

rescue scorpions who only sting him. And he says to his detractors, it might be the scorpions nature

to sting. But that doesn't mean I'm giving up my nature to help and to save.

Might it also be that this mother hen has the nature to cover, to protect, to nurture despite

the response. And so it is that we every single day as people of faith

are asked, who is this Jesus? What sort of person do we trust?

There's a whole other sermon that could come from this, but I'm going to offer

one observation that many co-religionists among us in our continent, pastors and theologians

and church people are making a lot of racket saying that we need Jesus to be masculine and we

need God to do some smiting. That's what we need in our world. So things like the Beatitudes,

forget that, mercy, forget that. God becomes like a Maccabean. It's going to fight.

Good on. Exact justice.

My less than humble opinion is, I don't think we should hold our breath for that.

And God operates much more like the mother hen. And get this, the God whom we believe created

it all, willing to risk it all for the sake of what has been created because there is this dream.

And there is this hope that one day all will be reconciled.

So there's hope, not only for the baby chicks,

the reluctant ones scattered.

There might even be hope for the fox and there might even be hope for the eagle, the empire.

Because it is God's nature. It is God's intention to reconcile, to bless and to save.

Amen.