

Second Sunday in Lent

Prelude

Welcome and Announcements

Call to Worship Matthew 4:4

One does not live by bread alone,

but by every word that comes from the mouth of God.

The grace of the Lord Jesus Christ be with you all.

And also with you.

Let us worship God.

Lenten Reading Hala Mosrie

*Hymn 450 Be Thou My Vision

Prayer of Confession

Holy and merciful God, in your presence we confess our failure to be what you created us to be.

You alone know how often we have sinned in wandering from your ways, in wasting your gifts, in forgetting your love.

By your loving mercy, help us live in your light and abide in your ways, for the sake of Jesus Christ our Savior. Amen.

Hymn 698 Take, O Take Me As I Am

Assurance of Forgiveness

The mercy of the Lord is from everlasting to everlasting.

I declare to you, in the name of Jesus Christ,

we are forgiven. Amen.

Old Testament Reading Psalm 27: 1-8, 13-14

Moments With Our Young Disciples

New Testament Reading Luke 13:31-35

Morning Message

Luke is still my favorite gospel... it is the gospel of prayer, of healing, of women. In this text Jesus uses a beautiful feminine image for himself...a mother hen.

Pastor Janet Hunt says when she reads this text she recalls a frightening moment in her life.

She was in college and was on a road trip with her mother. They had stopped at a deserted rest stop and Janet jumped out of the car and headed to the rest room. Her mother waited in the car. As she sat, she glanced up to see a man emerging from behind the building. She says her mother found the man's facial expression menacing.

When Janet emerged from the ladies room, she caught a glimpse of the man lurking near her. She quickened her pace, anxious to reach the safety of the car.

What she saw next was a surprise and may have saved her life.

Her mother opened her car door, got out and stood with her eyes fixed on the man's face as he walked right behind Janet. She stared him down and he came no further.

Janet was able to get into the car and they made a fast exit.

Mothers put themselves in harm's way to protect their young. How many news clips have we seen recently of mothers guarding and guiding their children out of Ukraine, out of harm's way? They are inspiring and heart-breaking at the same time. Mothers will expose themselves to all sorts of dangers to make sure the one they love is safe. It doesn't matter how old their child is. A mother's instinct is to care for her children before herself.

And so it is that in today's reading, Jesus compares himself to a mother hen who will do whatever it takes to protect those baby chicks from the menacing fox. Like the mother hen who gathers her young under her outstretched wings.

Twice I've seen a fox. Once I was driving to a conference center in rural Jackson County and on the long bumpy access road, I saw a pretty little red Pomeranian

dog run across a field and into a ditch beside the road, where it popped its pretty little red head up to check me out. It was only after I had driven a distance down the road that it dawned on me that it was no one's pet, but a fox.

The second time was just a few weeks ago on my way home from church. And at first glance, I thought once again that this was a dog, though it wasn't so small, cute, or colorful. It was sort of gray and brown and straggly looking, stalking something in the weeds along the road that runs by the riverbank.

A hen is no match for a fox, is she? And yet, Janet Hunt says, that's the way of the gospel. The gospel always chooses the way of love and humility and sacrifice over power and domination. The gospel calls us to summon courage to stand up in the face impending danger. The way of the gospel is to choose a path because it is the right thing, not necessarily the safest or the most innovative, lucrative or powerful choice.

Or, as my old yoga instructor used to say, "All that's gold does not glitter."

Jesus could have chosen another image, another creature, as his image here. He could have chosen the great majestic eagle like the one mentioned in the words of Exodus 19:4.

"You yourselves have seen what I did to the Egyptians, and how I bore you on eagle's wings and brought you to myself."

Or this one from Isaiah 40: "But they that wait upon the Lord shall renew their strength. They shall mount up with wings like eagles, they shall run and not be weary, they shall walk and not faint."

Why would Jesus choose a mother hen?

A hen and her brood would be a common image in that day and time. The people to whom Jesus spoke would be familiar with it and would know for sure that chickens are frequent victims of foxes. They may have lost some of their own chickens that way.

But here's something else to consider: The life and ministry of Jesus is focused on the vulnerable. Much of his ministry is spent engaged with people who are suffering from serious mental, physical, or spiritual illness. These are people who are well-acquainted with failure and grief and rejection and loss of hope. People who need protection.

Jesus does not hold his gifts to his vest or use them for his own enrichment. Jesus doesn't just bless the strong or the pretty or the well to do. Jesus gives and gives and gives, to everyone, sometimes to the point of exhaustion. Like a mother...

Chickens are smarter than I knew. Apparently, they can anticipate and plan and they are capable of worrying. Just like a mother...According to Janet Hunt, this is what one source says: "Neuron organization in chicken brains is highly structured and suggests that, like humans, chickens have evolved to an an impressive level of intelligence to help improve their survival."

So, Jesus chooses the smart, self-sacrificing chicken as his model. And you and I are playing the role of those little chicks, who seem intent on ignoring the efforts of the one who would save us from all those threats beyond our mother's protective embrace.

And it's here that the whole picture comes together for me. We enter this story as that brood of chicks...scattered, distracted, and unaware of the threats and dangers always lurking near and unaware of how that grieves the heart of God.

The lament of Jesus over Jerusalem is also his lament over us.

It would seem that Jesus is saying to us that we can all be loved, protected and cared for if we would only let Jesus draw us in, draw us closer, so close that we can feel his heart beating, his breath on our cheeks.

But what would that require?

We have three TVs. One on each floor. And yesterday, they were all set on WV Public Television. Because for some reason, we wanted to catch as much of the

last day of the legislative session as we could. Yes. We are that nerdy at 167 Iroquois Trail.

Most of the day we were predictably irritated. Robert's Rules didn't make it any more palatable. There were some reasonable bills being considered. But, first there was considerable posturing, preaching, and pontificating. What a mess.

Close to 11pm, there was a moment in which one of the retiring Senators, Romano, of Harrison County, was recognized for his service. After several good, commendable remarks, the senator took a moment to respond. I didn't catch it all, but, among his parting words were these I've paraphrased:

"Be kind to one another. We need each other. One mind doesn't have all the answers. I can say I love you all. You are all my friends, even if we disagree. The love of money and power isn't gonna get us into heaven. It doesn't make a darn bit of difference what we do for ourselves, but it can make a huge difference to do for those who can't do for themselves. We haven't suffered, but there are plenty around us who are suffering. We need to reach out a hand and lift them up. That's what matters. That's what we've been put on earth to do."

Well said. That's putting the hay and oats down where the sheep and goats can get at it.

Real power, it seems to me, finds its origin in clinging to power's source. For us, that's Jesus. Real power, it seems to me, finds its purpose in imitating the source's behavior. For us, that means, we love God and we love one another, and we do unto others as we want others to do unto us.

It's been a long time since I've driven my kids to school or ferried them around on long trips, or moved them into a dorm. But even today, years hence, I often pray that there will be a work mom or a neighborhood mom who will keep a watchful eye on them like I would do, to stand between them and danger, and to cheer them on as they spread their own wings.

*Affirmation of Faith The Apostles' Creed p. 35

*Hymn 580 Gloria Patri

Intercessions for Lent

Jesus, remember us when you come into your kingdom.

As we journey with you toward Jerusalem, may we be aware of both crises and opportunities in this life of discipleship. Increase in us our capacity to empathize, to work for peace, to forgive as you have forgiven us.

Hear now our prayers for the world, our neighbors, and ourselves:

For your church around the world, we ask for new life.

For all who carry out ministries in your church, we ask grace and wisdom.

For those who have accepted the spiritual disciplines of Lent, we ask inspired discipleship.

For Christians of every land, we ask unity in your name.

For Jews and Muslims and people of other faiths, we ask your divine blessing.

For those who cannot believe, we ask your faithful love.

For governors and rulers of every land, we ask your sober guidance.

For people who suffer and sorrow, especially your sons and daughters in Ukraine, we ask your healing peace.

Holy God,

Your Word, Jesus Christ, spoke peace to a sinful world

and brought humanity the gift of reconciliation,

by the suffering he endured.

Teach those who bear his name to follow the example he gave us.

May our faith, hope, and charity

turn hatred into love, conflict to peace, and death to eternal life.

We lift our prayers to you now for the health and well-being of our church members, families, and friends in their particular circumstances. *Silence.*

As the pandemic wears on, save us from weariness, but, strengthen us to seek health and wholeness here and everywhere.

We lift our prayers with the confidence of the children and God, saying, Our Father...Amen.

Presenting Our Tithes and Offerings

*Hymn 606 Doxology

*Prayer of Dedication

Blessed are you, O God, giver of all things. Through your goodness, we have these gifts to share.

Use us and what we have gathered, in serving the world with your love and compassion, through the one who gave himself for us,

Christ Jesus our Lord. Amen.

*Hymn 187 Savior, Like a Shepherd Lead Us

*Blessing

Go now, and live before God in openness and integrity.

Set your minds on the ways of God,

not clinging to your own life,

but taking up your cross to follow Jesus.

And may God give you a share in the eternal covenant;

may you be found faithful when Christ comes again in glory;

and may the Holy Spirit strengthen you in faith and courage,

and lead you in the way of righteousness. Amen.

*Postlude