

March 13, 2022

2nd Lent, Year C

Genesis 15: 1-12, 17-18

Psalm 27: 1-10

Luke 13: 31-35

Luke 13:31-35

Some Pharisees came and said to Jesus, "Get away from here, for Herod wants to kill you." He 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. Yet today, tomorrow, and the next day I must be on my way, because it is impossible for a prophet to be killed outside of Jerusalem.' 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 were not willing! See, your house is 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.'"

In the name of the Father, and of the Son, and of the Holy Spirit. Amen.

Tim was in our garage on a warm summer's day a few years ago. He was working on restoring a boat, and was pretty focused on the task, when he sensed someone was looking at him. He looked up and saw a chicken, in his garage, eyeing him. Tim recognized her and said hello. Her name, was Lady Cluck.

Lady Cluck and her sister chickens lived across the road and up two doors from us. After our neighbors, GW and Debbie, got to know us they asked if we would mind if the chickens wandered in our yard upon occasion.

We loved the chickens, all creatively named, and welcomed them. The girls mainly wandered on GW and Debbie's property, but they would occasionally, yes, decide to cross the road, hence the visitor to Tim's garage.

Lady Cluck and her friends were sweet, funny, shy, and utterly defenseless. Their dangers were many: possums, raccoons, coyotes, hawks, and yes, foxes.

Our gospel today finds Jesus on the road to Jerusalem, speaking too of chickens, and receiving a warning from a group of Pharisees. The Pharisees search for Jesus to warn him to run away, that Herod Antipas, the ruler of Galilee, wants to kill Jesus.

This Herod is the son of the Herod who wanted to kill Jesus as a tiny infant; now the son has picked up the task and hunts for Jesus too.

But Jesus is not frightened by Herod; he does not want to run and hide. Jesus refers to Herod as “that fox” and says his message for that fox is that he, Jesus, is too busy healing and caring for folks to be bothered with threats and bullying.

In this time, in March of 2022, it is hard to read of Herod and his threats and violence, and not think of Putin and how he is treating Ukraine. And to hear the people of Ukraine, so vulnerable still answering that fox Putin echoing our brother Jesus, that they also are too busy caring for others, tending the injured, to give any energy to fearing a tyrant.

Jesus knows where he is going, he knows the cross is ahead and that his way of love, of compassion of speaking up for the helpless, threatens Herod and all in power, and that he will be killed, he will die on the cross.

The people of Ukraine are fighting desperately, rescuing and helping desperately, but know too that they and their country are in the gravest of danger, that the path they walk, the way of compassion and caring for the helpless, is a path ever closer to death.

Jesus moves from the fox to the hen, using the image of a hen gathering her brood, her chicks, under her wings, covering them with her warmth, protecting them, to speak of his yearning to care for the city of Jerusalem.

This image of the hen with her chicks reminds me of all the stories we have heard over these weeks, of everyday folks doing what they can to help as refugees arrive. The mothers of Poland leaving baby strollers available at the border for Ukrainian mothers to use. Rides being offered, meals prepared and shared, an extra blanket placed around shoulders, doors opened.

We too are called to be the hen, to offer what we can to help, especially as the

number of refugees grows, chicks without a mother, far from home.

The Episcopal writer Barbara Brown Taylor wrote about her experiences raising chickens, including, the evocative story of helping chicks without mothers:

While I care for a large neighborhood of chickens, the white Silkies are my favorites. They are fantastic-looking birds, with tufts of fluff on their heads and feathers on their feet. Some of them even have beards. From their beaks to their toes, they are covered with soft, white plumage that never quite graduates into real feathers. Consequently, they do not fly, and they nest on the ground, which is why I keep them in a pen instead of letting them roam free. Given their evolutionary disadvantages, it is amazing that Silkies still exist, but since they show up in Marco Polo's diaries, they have been around a long time. I first discovered them when I needed a foster mother for an orphaned guinea chick. I had heard that Silkies are good mothers, so I shopped around in the Market Bulletin until I found some for sale over in Royston. After a little bargaining, I had one rooster, four teenagers and two hens in my crate when I saw one gray hen strutting around the pen.

"What's she?" I asked.

"Blue Silkie," the chicken lady said, "cross between black and white."

"How much for her?" I asked.

"Six bucks," the chicken lady said, impressing me with the gulf between price and worth. That blue-gray hen was a stunner, with soft herringbone feathers the color of Irish tweed. The black eyes with which she studied me were perfectly round. When I reached out to touch her, she pecked me, but only for show. It was love at first sight. When the Silkies and I got home, I saved her for the orphaned chick. First I lay on the grass while she and the baby watched each other through the mesh of the cage. Then I placed her inside. Both she and the baby froze. The baby cheeped. The hen did not move a feather. The baby cheeped again. The hen stayed right where she was. The baby took a few steps toward her. I held my breath. The gray hen lifted her wings. The baby scooted right into that open door. When I checked on them an hour later, all I could see was a little guinea chick

head poking out from under that gray hen's wing.

How can we help? How can we lift our wings and offer paths to safety and warmth? How can we a small part of the care and compassion, the way of love that Jesus teaches?

In the face of violence and bullying and tyranny, can we join Jesus in being too busy offering care to be afraid?

Episcopal Relief and Development is one of many fine groups offering aid, especially to the refugees from Ukraine. Episcopal Relief and Development was originally founded by The Episcopal Church to assist people fleeing Europe during World War II.

How ever we decide to help, may we join with the chickens, knowing the dangers all around, especially from the foxes, but still living, living and helping and serving in God's love.

Amen.