

Sunday's Sermon

Gloria Dei Lutheran Church

250 Fox Hill Road ■ Hampton, Virginia 23669

March 16, 2025

The Reverend David E. Fox

Second Sunday in Lent (Year C) 2025

Luke 13.31-35

Grace to you and peace from God the Father and our Lord and Savior, Jesus the Christ. Amen.

One of the scariest things in the world as a parent is that you simply cannot protect your children from everything. When a child is born into a family, you do things like putting covers on all of the electrical outlets, reviewing and then buying the safest crib and car seat on the market, checking out baby monitors that can pick up movement from their breathing. When it's cold out, you bundle the child up. When they are starting to get sick, you call the doctor. Poison control is on speed dial.

You do everything in your power to make that child safe. Yet, even through all of the precautions, we can't protect them from everything. There are outside factors that could cause harm to a child that we don't even want to think about, because they bring us so much anxiety. There also comes the day when our children grow in their independence and they will choose their own friends and make their own decisions, and with that, they will make their own mistakes. As children and as adult children, they will have difficult times in their lives. As parents, we hope they will come talk to us about their struggles; but chances are, they will keep things quiet like most teenagers, choosing to deal with those difficulties on their own.

When our children hurt – we hurt, when our children celebrate – we celebrate. It's a scary world out there, but no matter what, no matter how bad things get, loving parents will always provide a place of comfort for their children.

My message for you today, sisters and brothers, is this: Even when there is a fox in the chicken house, there is comfort to be found in the wings of the mother hen.

In our first reading from Genesis, God is in the process of cutting a covenant with Abram. This is where God is promising Abram as many descendants as there are stars in the sky. Abram is told to make a huge sacrifice to God. Typically, a sacrifice is only one big animal or two birds; but here God is asking for a cow, a goat, a ram, a turtledove, and a pigeon – there is one of every kind of animal that is used in sacrificing to God in the Old Testament. After Abram makes this large sacrifice to the Lord, he falls into a deep sleep. While Abram is asleep, he is terrified.

Our reading jumps over the reason of why he is terrified, but I'll fill you in. God has told Abram that he will give him as many descendants as there are stars in the sky – which sounds more joyous

than scary; but the part where Abram becomes terrified is when God tells him that his descendants will be oppressed and will be slaves for many years.

Could you imagine what was running through Abram's mind? He was going to have all these children in his family, children that he would love to provide for and to protect, yet he isn't going to be able to protect them from the oppression and slavery that they are going to face. This is not the news that loving parents want to hear. I'm sure Abram wanted to hear that all of his family would live lives full of joy and free from pain. At this news of what was to become of his descendants, Abram must have felt like there was a fox in the chicken house.

In our Gospel reading, there is an image that Jesus creates by calling Herod a fox, and relating himself to a mother hen. That powerful image tells us there is a fox in the henhouse.

There's a fox in the henhouse, now what is to be done? The Pharisees are trying to warn Jesus about Herod, the fox, and yet Jesus stays resolute – his mission unwavering. He's journeying to the cross.

Jesus responds to the Pharisees with, "How often have I desired to gather your children together as a hen gathers her brood under her wings, and you were not willing!"

The Pharisees are trying to protect Jesus, but Jesus is trying to protect the Pharisees and everyone, by being a great mother hen. If the mother hen leaves the chicken coop at the sight of a fox, then all of the eggs and all of the chicks will be devoured by that fox.

Jesus is telling the Pharisees and us readers that we don't need to protect Jesus, but rather we are the ones in need of a savior and that we need to run towards the arms of Christ who is our mother hen.

Jesus is offering protection and refuge for everyone who will turn towards him, from the fox, not just the fox Herod, but the fox that is all evil found in this broken system in which we live. Jesus desires to draw all people unto himself to provide them with a place of comfort, a place of protection, and a place of love. Even when there is a fox in the chicken house, there is comfort to be found in the wings of the mother hen.

I believe it is too easy for us to say that Jesus' words, "How often have I desired to gather your children together as a hen gathers her brood under her wings, and you were not willing!" were just words for the Pharisees in the gospel text. I believe it is too easy for adults to talk about children not wanting to come to us for help, overlooking our own shortfall in the same matter – even grown-ups want to run in their own direction rather than run towards Jesus when things go wrong.

We try to mask our hurt by eating, or by getting soused on booze, or by mindlessly watching television or scrolling through social media, or by taking it out on others, especially those whom we love. I do believe Jesus' words ring true for those of us whom run away from God rather than running toward God when there is a fox in our own hen house. Jesus is clearly speaking to us when he says, "How often have I desired to gather your children together as a hen gathers her brood under her wings, and you were not willing!" Are you willing to run toward Jesus?

Sisters and brothers, if God could put a baby in the arms of Sarah, part the Red Sea for Moses, make the sun stand still for Joshua, shut the mouths of the lions for Daniel, open up the prison walls for Peter, and raise Lazarus from the dead then God can undoubtedly care for you too. There is nothing in the world you have faced, are facing, or will face that is too big for God to handle. Even when there is a fox in the chicken house, there is comfort to be found in the wings of the mother hen.

In our most vulnerable times, those times like a parent trying to protect their child from all the bad things that might happen, those dark times, like Abram had, when he saw that life wasn't going to be just peachy, those times when a King is out to devour anyone who gets in his way, those times when politicians are teaching us to hate and hurl insults at those who think differently than they do, those times when stock markets are falling and grocery prices are rising, those times when nothing seems to go right, those times when we're about ready to throw in the towel and call it quits, those times when it seems that things can't get any worse, Jesus is standing with his arms outstretched wide saying, "Come to me, all you who are weary and burdened and I will give you rest." Jesus is calling us out of the world where we are fighting for ourselves, with our backs up against the wall. Jesus is calling us to come underneath his wings of love, his wings of justice, his wings of mercy, his wings of forgiveness.

Jesus journeyed to the cross, experienced death, and was victorious over the grave. Jesus paved a way for all of us who live in a world where the fox is lurking, where evil dwells, so that we might not live in fear any longer.

Jesus has prepared a place for us that is not of this world, a place to find comfort and rest. In Jesus, there is a place of mercy and forgiveness. In God, there is a banquet of hope for the hungry. In the Holy Spirit, there is a fountain of joy for the thirsty. In the Triune God, there is a home in the heart of our Savior. In Christ, there is a home prepared for the weary. Even when there is a fox in the chicken house, there is comfort to be found in the wings of the mother hen.

Brothers and sisters, it's time we stop acting like children who try to face their problems on their own. It's time to recognize that we can't face the foxes in our chicken houses on our own. It's time we run towards Jesus, rather than running away from Jesus. The Good News is that Jesus is giving us a place of peace and rest even during the most difficult and fragile times of our lives.