

August 26, 2018
Animals of the Bible
Foxes & Doves : It's The Little Things

First Reading ~ *Song of Songs 2:8-17*

The voice of my beloved!
Look, coming here, leaping down the mountains,
bounding over the hill!
My beloved is like a gazelle or a young deer!
Look, there, standing behind our wall,
gazing in through the window like the moon,
My beloved calls me, "Come sweetheart, my pretty one,
for now winter is past, the rain is gone,
the flowers are blooming.
It's time for singing;
Let's walk out through the valleys
and listen to the song of the dove.
The fig trees are setting fruit,
and the grape vines are in blossom,
the air is full of fragrance.
Arise my love, my fair one, and come away.

O my little dove
out here in the clefts of the rocks,
in the covert of the cliff,
let me see your face, let me hear your voice.
Talk to me; let me hear the joy of your voice.
O it is sweet, your voice is,
like the voice of the dove.
Catch us the foxes, the little foxes,
that ruin the vineyards-
for our vineyards are in bloom.

Second Reading

~ *adapted from "The Collected Sermons of Fred B. Craddock"*

When we begin this calibration of distinctions, great, not so great, down to very, very minor, there is the temptation to trivialize the major portions of most people's lives. Those who are gifted and strong sit at long tables of decision, and affect the lives of many. But what a temptation when you're dealing with matters of major importance to miss the little things. "It was only one family." "It was only one church." "It was only one little community." "It was only one person." And when you enlarge the screen of your awareness of the hugeness of a matter, it can be a way of coping out from attending to one little thing.

I recall some years ago I went to Oklahoma City to take part in a discussion of what could be done among the Christian and Jewish communities to relieve a tragic situation that existed in a small tribe of Native Americans on a reservation in southwest Oklahoma. We settled around a table as we discussed the problem, a serious problem. Then somebody said, "But isn't that a problem among all Native Americans? Then somebody said, "And think of the growing Hispanic population." We gave an hour or so to that and then other minorities, and people of color. The screen grew larger and larger and larger and by five o'clock in the afternoon, this committee of the gifted and strong were sitting there in a pool of pity for the entire world. And that poor little subtribe in southwest Oklahoma received no help at all from us.

The danger for the gifted and strong is to sit at long tables and consider the big picture but never improve the playground for the children in the neighborhood where they live. Do you understand? The fact that millions, millions in the world are starving is not a reason for me to spend my time pondering that, but never volunteering one hour at the soup kitchen of my church.

The world is falling apart. There is dissention in Rome. Hunger everywhere. Fringe groups. Civil strife. Disagreements among large bodies of powerful people. Anger. Hate. And God looks it over to get the big picture, and the next sound you hear is a baby in a little obscure town; a Jewish baby named Yeshua, Jesus, mewling and puking in his mother's arms. This is what God is doing? Did not God see the big picture? What can that baby do? Good question. What can that baby do? And Jesus said, years later, "I want all of you to understand that even a cup of cold water given to a child does not go unnoticed by the God who smiles upon it."