

Sermon and Prayers + Pastor Priscilla Geerde

March 16, 2025 + Second Sunday in Lent

Prayer of the Day

God of the covenant, in the mystery of the cross you promise everlasting life to the world. Gather all peoples into your arms, and shelter us with your mercy, that we may rejoice in the life we share in your Son, Jesus Christ, our Savior and Lord, who lives and reigns with you and the Holy Spirit, one God, now and forever.

Amen.

Gospel: Luke 13:31-35

³¹ At that very hour some Pharisees came and said to [Jesus,] “Get away from here, for Herod wants to kill you.” ³² 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. ³³ 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.’ ³⁴ 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! ³⁵ 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.’ ”

Sermon by Pastor Priscilla Geerde

The Lord is my chicken, I shall not fear. He gathers me under his wings that are too weak to fly; he shelters me from the rain and wind as best he can. He makes loud noises at my enemies and puffs out his feathers to comfort me and scare them. Though the fox and owl try to attack and consume me, I shall not be

eaten; for God has a sharp beak and some wicked talons. Surely, I will be safe if I stick close by to my Lord, the chicken, forever.

That just doesn't quite have the same ring to it, does it? Something about the image is off. In Genesis, we get heavens and torches, in the Psalm we get light and salvation, a stronghold and rock, in Philippians a Savior and heaven, and then Luke gives us a chicken. The hen of God. That is not a title we usually add to our prayers and praises and proclamations about the power of God, and yet, here it is. Today, Jesus is met with the news that Herod is wanting to kill him. This is not the Kind Herod of his birth, who already tried to kill him, this is a new one, one of the sons of that King Herod. This Herod has been stripped of the title king because his dad didn't want any of his sons to have the same power he did, so he divided the kingdom among them, destroying the title of king. Needless to say, this Herod is a little testy because of that and he is always on the lookout for more power and more control. He is dangerous. And Jesus acknowledges that danger. Even though what Jesus says sounds very mocking and dismissive, he recognizes the cunning and the grab for power that Herod seeks in calling him a fox. Foxes are sly, they are quick, and they can wreak havoc in order to get what they want. Jesus is aware of all that, he just isn't willing to be swayed by it.

What he does do in response to the news is something that is absolutely perfect for this season of Lent-he laments. He, according to dictionary.com,

expresses grief and sorrow over something-he laments. In other words, he mourns the reality that surrounds him. He allows for sadness. How Lent is that? And yet, it's hard to do, to sit in grief and sorrow on purpose and simply feel the pain. He wants Jerusalem to be different, for Herod to be different, for life to be different, and he speaks that out loud, without the need to heal it, fix it, or change it in the moment. We struggle with that a lot. To just allow the grief or hurt to simply be. When any of us express sorrow and pain and discomfort, how often is others' or our own response that of fixing it, ignoring it, making it different or getting past it. We don't like pain, we can't explain grief, sorrow makes us uncomfortable, so we try not to spend much time there, especially around others. But this is time for it. Not just Lent, but anytime and every time the world feels overwhelming. Like now-wars sucks, politics stink, the weather is enough, health and wellness are draining, relationships are hard, loneliness is heavy, worry is exhausting, grief is consuming, now you can keep going in your head or out loud if you need it. But, let's sit within it for a moment....(allow some time). The Lord is my chicken; I shall not fear.

It sounds funny, but it is a response to lament and to fear. It's not a coincidence that Jesus calls Herod a fox, and then longs to gather people like a hen. Have you ever seen the fierceness of hen with her babies? It's no joke about the beak and talons. It is incredible the way this seemingly helpless, flightless bird

becomes fit to fight a fox, and she will protect those chicks with every ounce of life in her body. When those wings go up, and the babes go under, it is shelter from the storm, a stronghold and fortress from the predator, a place of protection and love like no other. And that is what Jesus wanted for the people, but he doesn't ignore the reality to get there. Notice, Jesus doesn't try to dismiss that there are foxes, he doesn't forget that the chicks sometimes lose their way, he doesn't act as though gathering together is easy, or solves all ills or removes all harm, but he knows that there is a better way to get through the danger, and that is in the shelter of his wings.

There is a place in this world for the lament, the sadness, a place for us to sit in the knowledge that some things in this life aren't and won't ever be what we would hope them to be. That grief and sorrow will always exist here. Jesus doesn't ask us to ignore our fears, to disregard the danger, or pretend that everything is okay, instead he offers a place for us to be through it all—that stronghold of Psalms, those heavens to stand under, and yes, even those chicken wings to hold us, all those and more in the arms of God who longs to gather us in, to protect us, and to love us. The Lord is my chicken, my mother hen, my fierce parent, the one I turn to in my fear. Amen.

Prayers

Led by the Spirit, let us turn to God in prayer for the church, the world, and all those in need.

Holy God, you long to gather your church under your wings. Bless the churches of Jerusalem, and all persecuted churches, that your people may take heart and stand firm as they witness and minister in your name. God, in your mercy, **receive our prayer.**

Holy God, you give shelter to living things as numerous as the stars. Strengthen the voice of prophets who call humanity to faithful care for the planet, that they would not be silenced but heeded as your messengers. God, in your mercy, **receive our prayer.**

Holy God, you raised up leaders like Abram, Sarai, and Paul to show your people what it means to rely on your promises. Guide today's leaders to work for justice and safeguard the world for future generations. God, in your mercy, **receive our prayer.**

Holy God, you are the stronghold of our life. Care tenderly for those who are ill in body or mind, and for people living in fear or need. May all know they are not alone. God, in your mercy, **receive our prayer.**

Holy God, you offer us citizenship in heaven. Unite communities of faith who are divided over earthly things, that following the way of your Son, they may set aside grudges and serve their neighbors with generosity and love. God, in your mercy, **receive our prayer.**

Holy God, you are our light and our salvation. We give thanks for the saints who have gone before us. Help us to trust in you as they did and to live according to their example. God, in your mercy, **receive our prayer.**

Receive the prayers of your people and draw all things together in your love, in the name of Jesus, who leads us from death to life. **Amen.**

Blessing

God our tender parent, God the crucified one, God the reconciling Spirit, \pm bless you now and forever. **Amen.**